

**Department for Work and Pensions**

**Research Report No 468**

# **Survey of relationship breakdown and child maintenance: Interim report**

**Anne Kazimirski and Eleanor Ireland**

A report of research carried out by the National Centre for Social Research on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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First Published 2007.

ISBN 978 1 84712 312 1

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Printed by Corporate Document Services.

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# Summary

This report is a policy-focused document developed in advance of the main relationship separation survey report due to be published in March 2008. A face-to-face survey was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research with Child Support Agency (CSA) non-resident parents (NRPs) and person with care (PWCs) and non-CSA PWCs and NRPs. The report focuses on an overview of separation and maintenance arrangements, views on private arrangements, use of information and support and debt and enforcement.



# 1 Background and methodology

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned a consortium led by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)<sup>1</sup> to carry out a survey on the experiences and views of separated parents, particularly in relation to child maintenance. The survey covered both parents with care (PWCs) and non-resident parents (NRPs) and included parents not involved with the Child Support Agency (CSA) as well as CSA clients. The key issues covered by the survey, and explored in this interim report, were parents' views of private arrangements (reflecting government plans to remove barriers to parents opting for these) compared to use of the new Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC) planned to replace the CSA, as well as their experience and views of information and support services (in relation to child maintenance). The main report will be published in 2008.

Parents not involved with the CSA were identified through a screening exercise<sup>2</sup>— 'non-CSA NRPs' were screened by telephone from Family Resources Survey (FRS) respondents<sup>3</sup>, and 'non-CSA PWCs' were screened by telephone and face-to-face from Child Benefit records. CSA clients were sourced from the CSA database. A 50 minute face-to-face interview was then carried out with all parents over June and September 2007. As found in previous research with this group, the screening-in rate for non-CSA NRPs was very low, hence, the data for this group is not statistically representative and needs to be treated with caution – this group is, therefore, not covered in this interim report (but will be to some extent in the main report).

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<sup>1</sup> In collaboration with Nick Wikeley (Southampton University) and Christine Skinner (York University).

<sup>2</sup> The definition of parents not involved with the CSA for this survey was 'never having been involved with the CSA', hence parents who used to be CSA clients (but no longer were) are not covered by this survey.

<sup>3</sup> The FRS is funded by DWP and is jointly carried out by NatCen and the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The CSA sample included both 'non-benefit' cases as well as cases where the PWC was on benefits<sup>4</sup> (and the data has been weighted to reflect the benefit/non-benefit split in the CSA database). Analysis by the PWC's benefit status (for both PWC and NRP cases<sup>5</sup>) is included later – further subgroup analysis will be conducted for the main report.

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<sup>4</sup> Cases where the NRP was on benefits were excluded - see the technical appendix of the main report for full details of the sampling approach.

<sup>5</sup> For PWCs, benefit status is based on interview data, while for NRPs, benefit status is based on the marker on the CSA database which is derived from Jobcentre Plus information, as NRPs were not asked about their ex-partner's benefit status.

## 2 Separation and maintenance arrangements

The main reasons cited by parents for their separation were similar across the three groups: growing apart, the ex-partner seeing someone else and arguing all the time (although the latter was more likely to be given as a reason by CSA cases) (Table 2.1). A higher proportion of CSA PWCs (24 per cent) cited domestic violence as a reason for separation versus non-CSA PWCs (18 per cent).

**Table 2.1 Reasons for break-up of relationship**

*Base: All parents who had been in a relationship with their ex-partner*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
We had grown apart	39	44	34
Ex-partner was seeing someone else	27	27	31
We argued all the time	24	33	36
Ex-partner violent towards me	18	10	24
Ex-partner had alcohol and/or drug problems	12	4	16
I had emotional problems/depression	9	5	12
Ex-partner had emotional problems/depression	8	11	11
Ex-partner had financial or money problems	6	3	8
I was pregnant	6	+	8
We were never committed to each other	5	9	7
I had financial or money problems	4	8	5
I was seeing someone else	4	7	2
Ex-partner was violent towards our child(ren)	3	3	4
I had alcohol and/or drug problems	2	3	2
General relationship breakdown	2	2	1

Continued

**Table 2.1 Continued**

*Base: All parents who had been in a relationship with their ex-partner*

	<b>Non-CSA PWCs %</b>	<b>CSA NRPs %</b>	<b>CSA PWCs %</b>
Emotional/mental abuse or manipulation	2	+	1
Problems with our parents	1	2	+
I was violent towards my ex-partner	1	1	1
Work or job related	1	1	1
I was violent towards our child(ren)	1	0	1
I/ex-partner had different priorities/plans	1	+	1
I/ex-partner did not get on/grew to dislike each other	1	+	1
I/ex-partner was in prison	+	1	0
Ex-partner was pregnant	+	1	0
Problems with our children	0	+	+
Moved away or lived a long way from ex-partner	0	+	+
Other reason	7	7	6
<i>Weighted bases</i>	<i>520</i>	<i>432</i>	<i>571</i>
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>520</i>	<i>435</i>	<i>577</i>

+ <0.5%

Just over a third of non-CSA PWCs (36 per cent) had an arrangement to receive child maintenance<sup>6</sup> – for three-quarters of these parents (73 per cent), this was a private arrangement, and for the remaining quarter (27 per cent), this arrangement had been made through the courts<sup>7</sup>. Amongst CSA cases, 89 per cent of NRPs said they were currently paying maintenance and 71 per cent of PWCs reported receiving maintenance.

The main reason for non-CSA PWCs not having an arrangement was not knowing where their ex-partner was (Table 2.2), which applied to a third of non-CSA PWCs. One-fifth also stated they preferred not to receive any child maintenance and a fifth, again, said that their ex-partner was helping in an informal way<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> How regular this arrangement was in comparison with compliance amongst CSA cases, will be explored in the main report.

<sup>7</sup> This breakdown reflects previous research (DWP White Paper, *A new system of child maintenance*, Cm 6979, December 2006).

<sup>8</sup> The role of informal financial support compared to child maintenance arrangements will be explored in the main report.

**Table 2.2 Reasons for not having an arrangement**

<i>Base: Non-CSA PWCs without child maintenance arrangement</i>	
	%
Don't know where NRP is	29
I prefer not to receive any child maintenance	22
NRP helps in an informal way	21
NRP cannot afford to pay	17
NRP said they would not pay/refused to pay	16
NRP is equally involved with the childcare	6
Waiting for an agreement to be made from court/CSA/other organisation	2
Other	7
<i>Weighted bases</i>	<i>374</i>
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>374</i>



### 3 Views on private arrangements

Throughout this chapter it is clear that non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs tend to be much more positive about private arrangements than CSA PWCs. For example, when asked how separated parents should make child maintenance agreements, half of non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs said they should agree between themselves, compared to one-fifth of CSA PWCs (Table 3.1). Benefit PWCs were more enthusiastic about private arrangements in comparison to non-benefit cases – 29 per cent compared to 17 per cent of non-benefit PWCs said parents should agree between themselves.

**Table 3.1 How parents should make child maintenance arrangements**

*Base: All parents*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Between themselves	49	53	22	54	51	29	17
With the help of a government agency	25	25	54	28	22	47	59
With the help of another organisation	24	20	21	15	23	22	21
Another way	2	3	3	3	3	2	3
<i>Weighted bases</i>	633	473	619	207	267	251	368
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	633	470	620	171	299	227	393

Parents were asked what factors they felt would help with making private arrangements (Table 3.2). Access to help with the payment level and the negotiation was important to all, while there was more interest from (over half of) CSA PWCs than the other two groups in monitoring of private arrangements, and the guarantee of help if arrangements fail. The need for a friendly relationship between parents was also highlighted, particularly by non-CSA PWCs.

**Table 3.2 Factors that would help parents make private arrangements**

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Access to help with working out how much to pay/receive	56	56	61
Access to help with parents negotiating between themselves	55	57 <sup>1</sup>	50
A friendly relationship between the parents	54	44	39
The parents being in a good financial situation	49	46	30
Trust between the parents	44	39	33
Guarantee government help will be provided if arrangements fail	40	36	55
The NRP having regular contact with the child/ren	39	51	29
A government agency checking private arrangements are being stuck to	34	32	56
Being able to register private arrangements with a government agency	18	30	31 <sup>2</sup>
Other	1	1	1
Nothing	1	2	1
<i>Weighted bases</i>	638	476	620
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	638	475	622

<sup>1</sup> This breaks down as 48 per cent of benefit NRPs and 63 per cent of non-benefit NRPs.

<sup>2</sup> This breaks down as 25 per cent of benefit PWCs and 34 per cent of non-benefit PWCs.

CSA PWCs (a quarter) were much more likely than the other two groups to say that they did not see any advantages to private arrangements, hence, non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs were more likely to cite most of the advantages listed in Table 3.3. CSA NRPs were, in particular, more likely to cite the advantage of parents having more control over the amount of child maintenance and non-CSA PWCs particularly highlighted the reduction of conflict.

**Table 3.3 Advantages of private arrangements**

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
They are easier and quicker	63	61 <sup>1</sup>	48
They help reduce conflict between parents	55	44	35
They mean you can keep it private	45	50	33
They give parents more control over the amount	41	52	32
They are more friendly	36	34	18
They give parents more control over how often the money is paid	35	37	29
They don't rely on anyone else	32	34	22
Other	1	+	1
No advantages	6	9	24
<i>Weighted bases</i>	639	476	621
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	639	473	622

+ <0.5 per cent

<sup>1</sup> This breaks down as 69 per cent of benefit NRPs and 55 per cent of non-benefit NRPs.

An important disadvantage of private arrangements to all three groups (but particularly for CSA PWCs), was the risk that the NRP might not be willing or able to pay (Table 3.4). CSA PWCs were also more likely to feel that private arrangements cannot be relied on, that there would not be anyone to help if the arrangement did not work and that they would give the NRP too much control. Non-benefit PWCs were more likely than benefit PWCs to cite almost all of these disadvantages – for example 45 per cent of non-benefit PWCs cited giving the NRP too much control as a disadvantage compared to 26 per cent of benefit PWCs.

**Table 3.4 Disadvantages of private arrangements**

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
<i>Base: All parents</i>			
The NRP might not be willing/able to pay	61	56	74
They can't be relied on	55	41	69
They might cause conflict/arguments between parents	54	56	62
You need to have a good relationship between the parents	51	56	53
There is no-one to help if the arrangement does not work	48	43	61
Parents have to stay in contact when they may not want to	39	37	45
They might not be official or legal	33	35	35
Gives the NRP too much control over maintenance payments	28	16	37
Other reason	1	1	0
No disadvantages	4	5	3
<i>Weighted bases</i>	638	475	624
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	638	473	626

We explained to parents the government's plans to improve information and guidance services available to parents (for example, through providing a new phone line and website) and then asked them how confident they would feel in making their own arrangements, using these improved information and guidance services. Reflecting the views above in relation to private arrangements, CSA PWCs (particularly non-benefit cases) showed the least confidence (Table 3.5), although once we factor in a trained impartial adviser, CSA cases, particularly PWCs, are more enthusiastic (see Table 3.6). CSA non-benefit NRPs also showed less confidence with making their own maintenance arrangements (25 per cent compared to 13 per cent of benefit NRPs said they were not at all confident).

**Table 3.5 Confidence in making private arrangements using improved information and guidance services***Base: All parents*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Very confident	23	24	8	30	19	10	6
Confident	24	32	16	35	30	21	13
Neither	19	11	11	12	11	12	9
Not confident	9	10	16	8	11	16	16
Not at all confident	15	20	47	13	25	38	54
Can make arrangements without information/support	9	3	2	3	3	3	1
<i>Weighted bases</i>	646	471	626	207	264	254	372
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	646	469	628	171	298	231	397

We also asked non-CSA PWCs without a private arrangement and CSA cases how likely they would be to make a private arrangement if they had help from a trained, impartial adviser (Table 3.6). CSA NRPs were particularly keen in comparison to the other two groups but around half of each PWC group, nevertheless, said they were likely or very likely to make a private arrangement in these conditions.

**Table 3.6 Likelihood of making a private arrangement if parent had access to a trained impartial adviser***Base: CSA clients and non-CSA PWCs with no current private arrangement*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very likely	23	42	22
Likely	27	32	29
Unlikely	20	14	17
Very unlikely	29	13	32
<i>Weighted bases</i>	393	460	622
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	393	459	623

Parents thought having a local, face-to-face, service was the area the government should focus on to ensure parents get the help they need to make their own child maintenance arrangements (Table 3.7).

**Table 3.7 Areas for the government to focus on to ensure parents get the help they need to make private arrangements**

*Base: All parents*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Help available face-to-face	56	60	61
A local service	52	54	56
Help available over the phone	38	32	39
A standard form for calculating maintenance	37	44	52 <sup>1</sup>
Sign posting to other organisations	37	31	33
A website	36	26	23
Neutral information and guidance	27	34	26
One central service	22	22	22
Providing more information for NRPs	14	39	15
Other	2	3	1
No improvement	3	2	3
<i>Weighted bases</i>	627	470	620
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	627	467	621

<sup>1</sup> This breaks down as 41 per cent of benefit PWCs and 59 per cent of non-benefit PWCs.

Parents were given the following description of C-MEC, and asked how likely they would be to use the new commission, first to help them work out how much maintenance needs to be paid, rather than working it out themselves, and then (for PWCs), for collecting maintenance and paying it to them.

*'The government plans to introduce a new agency to replace the existing Child Support Agency. They will make it easier to work out how much maintenance should be paid and they will have new enforcement powers for when parents do not pay. Parents will be able to use this new agency for different things: to help them work out how much maintenance needs to be paid; to collect maintenance from non-resident parents and pay it to parents with care; or to enforce agreements when parents do not pay.'*

Around half of CSA PWCs said they would be very likely to use the agency to calculate the maintenance level – a much higher proportion than the other two groups (Table 3.8). Benefit status had an impact, with 54 per cent of non-benefit PWCs saying they would be very likely to use the agency in this way compared to 40 per cent of benefit PWCs. CSA PWCs were also much keener on using the agency to collect maintenance, in comparison to non-CSA cases (and again, 49 per cent of non-benefit PWCs said they would be very likely to use the agency in this way compared to 36 per cent of benefit PWCs).

**Table 3.8 Likelihood of using new agency**

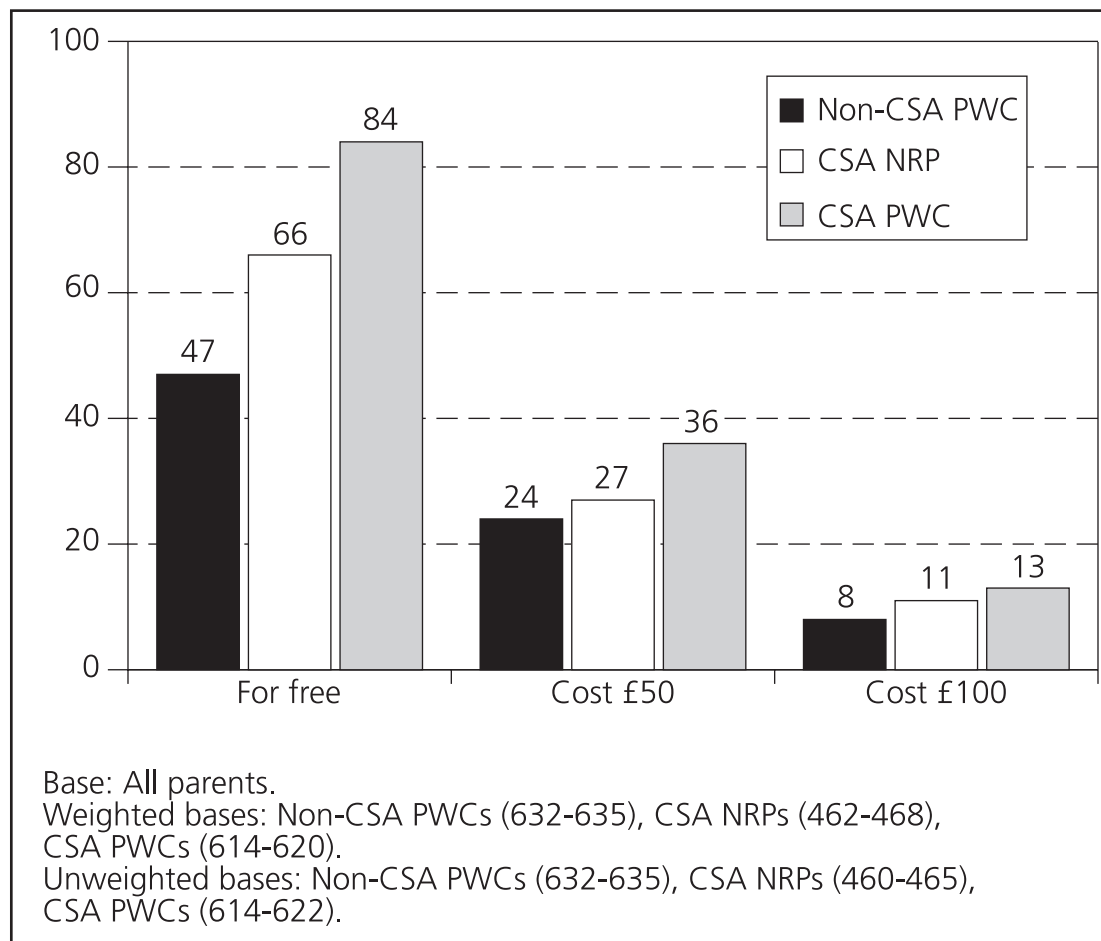
*Base: All parents*

	To calculate maintenance level			To collect maintenance	
	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA PWCs %
Very likely	19	25	48	11	44
Likely	29	40	36	20	33
Unlikely	22	17	7	24	11
Very unlikely	31	17	9	45	12
<i>Weighted bases</i>	635	468	620	633	619
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	635	465	622	633	620

Charging a flat rate fee for the initial calculation had an impact on parents' interest in using the agency to calculate maintenance owed (Figure 3.1). The proportion of parents stating they were very likely or likely to use the agency in this way, clearly reduced as the cost of making a calculation increased. Charging had a particularly big impact on benefit PWCs – only 24 per cent said they would be very likely or likely to use the agency to calculate the maintenance level if the charge was £50 compared to 43 per cent of non-benefit cases, and once the charge was raised to £100, this proportion had decreased to four per cent of benefit PWCs compared to 19 per cent of their non-benefit counterparts.

Benefit PWCs were also specifically asked about what they would do in relation to their child maintenance arrangements if they no longer had to use a government agency: 44 per cent said they would try to use a government agency, 32 per cent said they would try to make a private arrangement and 24 per cent said they would probably not make any arrangements. As for the impact of a possible full maintenance disregard (being able to keep all their child maintenance on top of their benefits), three-quarters of benefit PWCs said this would make no difference to staying on benefits or looking for paid work (Table 3.9) and twice as many people stated they would be more likely to look for work than said they would be more likely to stay on benefits.

**Figure 3.1 Likelihood of using agency (very likely or likely) for working out maintenance level, if cost was nothing, £50 and £100**



**Table 3.9 Impact of being able to keep all child maintenance on top of benefits**

Base: CSA PWCs on Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance and not in work

	%
It would make no difference to staying on benefits/looking for paid work	74
More likely to look for paid work	17
More likely to stay on benefits	9
<i>Weighted bases</i>	239
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	216

## 4 Use of information and support

So, had non-CSA PWCs received information or support in the past in connection with their child maintenance arrangements? Forty-six per cent had received information or support, including from family or friends – a lower proportion than CSA PWCs (57 per cent), but a similar one to CSA NRPs (48 per cent). Non-CSA PWCs were also less likely to have received support from family or friends – 24 per cent compared to 31 per cent of each group of CSA clients (and benefit PWCs were less likely to have received such support – 25 per cent compared to 35 per cent of non-benefit PWCs).

Once we focus on using formal support only (i.e. excluding sole use of family or friends for support), we find that just a third of non-CSA PWCs (33 per cent) and CSA NRPs (31 per cent) had used formal support, compared to 41 per cent of CSA PWCs (this also excludes use of the CSA).

Parents' sources of support in the past in relation to child maintenance (as well as potential sources of future support, discussed below) are shown in Table 4.1 – of those who had received support, half of non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs had done so from a solicitor, compared to just over a third of CSA PWCs. However, this varied widely by benefit status: 45 per cent of non-benefit PWCs had used a solicitor compared to 24 per cent of benefit PWCs.

Looking ahead to the future, CSA cases were more likely to think they would need formal support in relation to making child maintenance arrangements (including the use of a government organisation like the CSA) – 82 per cent of CSA PWCs and 77 per cent of CSA NRPs compared to 63 per cent of non-CSA PWCs. Of those who said they might need support in the future, just over half of CSA PWCs said that they would go to the CSA or a government organisation (more than either non-CSA PWCs or CSA NRPs). The Citizens Advice Bureau was also a popular likely source of support, especially for CSA NRPs, as were solicitors (although less for CSA PWCs in comparison to the other two groups).

Once we focus on non-governmental support (i.e. excluding interest in the use of a government organisation like the CSA), two-thirds of CSA PWCs (67 per cent) and CSA NRPs (68 per cent) thought they would need formal support, compared to 56 per cent of non-CSA PWCs.

**Table 4.1 Sources of past support and potential sources of future support**

*Base: All parents who had received formal support/all parents who might need formal support in the future*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	Past CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	Non-CSA PWCs %	Future CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
CSA/Government organisation	n/a	n/a	n/a	42	38	55
Solicitor	50	47	36	41	40	33
Jobcentre Plus	22	2	40 <sup>1</sup>	18	6	21 <sup>2</sup>
CAB	14	41	17 <sup>3</sup>	46	59	48
CAFCASS	8	9	5	10	14	12
Social services	8	5	8	5	9	6
Health visitor	6	+	7	4	2	7
Relate	4	6	+	3	3	1
Family mediation helpline	3	8	1	5	3	+
One parent families	3	4	5	8	4	10
Gingerbread	2	2	1	3	2	2
Parentline plus	2	1	1	2	2	4
Womens Aid	1	0	1	1	1	+
Fathers advice/support group	0	7	+	+	14	1
Church/spiritual leader	0	3	1	2	1	+
MP	0	1	+	0	0	0
Other organisation	12	13	5	2	3	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>401</i>	<i>368</i>	<i>511</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>252</i>	<i>401</i>	<i>354</i>	<i>514</i>

+ <0.5%

<sup>1</sup> This breaks down as 57 per cent of benefit PWCs and 27 per cent of non-benefit PWCs.

<sup>2</sup> This breaks down as 36 per cent of benefit PWCs and 10 per cent of non-benefit PWCs.

<sup>3</sup> This breaks down as 11 per cent of benefit PWCs and 22 per cent of non-benefit PWCs.

The majority of parents had previously received support through face-to-face meetings (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Medium of past support***Base: All parents who had received formal support<sup>1</sup>*

	<b>Non-CSA PWCs %</b>	<b>CSA NRPs %</b>	<b>CSA PWCs %</b>	<b>CSA benefit PWCs %</b>	<b>CSA non- benefit PWCs %</b>
Face-to-face	76	83	83	87	78
Telephone	29	34	32	21	44
Emails	4	6	1	0	2
Websites	9	13	6	0	12
Leaflets	11	12	9	6	13
Self help group	0	4	0	0	0
Internet forum	2	6	3	3	3
Workshops	0	1	+	1	0
Other	8	4	1	1	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>185</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>89</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>182</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>93</i>

+ &lt;0.5 per cent

<sup>1</sup> Here, the base for types of support received in the past is all parents who had received professional support apart from those who had received support from a solicitor only, due to the way the questionnaire was designed. Bases are too small to report on benefit/non-benefit NRPs.

For those who said they might need support in the future, face-to-face was also a popular medium of preference (two-thirds to three-quarters of each group selected face-to-face meetings as a way they would like to receive information and support). Support by phone was also favoured, particularly by CSA PWCs. Taking benefit status into account, non-benefit PWCs had an equal interest in face-to-face meetings and telephone support (63 per cent stated an interest in each type of support), while benefit PWCs had a clearer preference for face-to-face meetings (74 per cent compared to 52 per cent with an interest in telephone support).

**Table 4.3 Interest in future mediums of support 1**

*Base: All parents who might need formal support in the future*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA CSA PWCs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %	benefit PWCs %
Face-to-face	72	75	67	71	78	74	63
Telephone	51	45	59	41	48	52	63
Emails	14	14	14	13	14	9	18
Websites	22	15	15	13	16	12	18
Leaflets	11	8	8	8	7	10	7
Self-help group	2	5	2	3	7	1	2
Internet forum	4	7	4	6	8	4	3
Workshops	2	4	2	2	5	3	2
Other	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	396	365	509	162	203	211	297
<i>Unweighted base</i>	396	352	512	132	220	194	318

As parents could select more than one medium, it is useful to look at the proportions selecting only one way of receiving support (Table 4.4). Parents who had expressed an interest in face-to-face support were split roughly evenly between parents with an interest in face-to-face support only and those who had also selected another type of support, hence 30 to 40 per cent of each group only mentioned face-to-face meetings. Benefit PWCs were more likely to state an interest in face-to-face support only (the difference for benefit NRPs is not statistically significant).

Twice as many CSA PWCs as the other two groups stated a preference for telephone support only (16 per cent compared to eight per cent of non-CSA PWCs and nine per cent of CSA NRPs).

**Table 4.4 Interest in future mediums of support 2**

*Base: All parents who might need formal support in the future*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Only face-to-face	30	40	31	44	36	37	27
Only telephone	8	9	16	11	8	15	16
Only one medium excluding face-to-face/ telephone	8	6	3	6	6	4	3
Face-to-face and at least one other	43	36	36	27	42	36	36
At least one other not including face-to-face	12	10	14	12	9	8	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>396</i>	<i>365</i>	<i>509</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>297</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>396</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>512</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>318</i>

<sup>1</sup> The other options were email, consulting websites, consulting publications/leaflets, self-help group, internet forum and workshops.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, 43 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 36 per cent of CSA NRPs, and 43 per cent of CSA PWCs stated a preference for telephone as well as at least one other medium (and non-benefit PWCs had more interest in such a combination – 47 per cent compared to 37 per cent of benefit PWCs).

Parents who had received support in face-to-face meetings were asked what type of support they had received in these meetings (in relation to child maintenance) (Table 4.5). PWCs had been particularly concerned with whether to set up a formal arrangement, and 40 per cent of CSA PWCs (compared to 26 per cent of their non-CSA counterparts and 19 per cent of CSA NRPs) had received support in relation to the best way for payments to be collected.

**Table 4.5 Type of past support received**

*Base: All parents who had received formal support in face-to-face meetings<sup>1</sup>*

	<b>Non-CSA PWCs %</b>	<b>CSA NRPs %</b>	<b>CSA PWCs %</b>	<b>CSA benefit PWCs %</b>	<b>CSA non- benefit PWCs %</b>
Whether to set up formal child maintenance arrangement	40	16	38	38	38
Working out how much child maintenance to pay/receive	31	33	33	29	38
Whether to make child maintenance arrangement at all	27	7	27	26	28
Best way to collect or make child maintenance payments	26	19	40	42	37
Emotional support	21	16	13	10	17
What to do if have problems with child maintenance payments	15	13	22	14	31
Whether to accept child maintenance payments	14	0	9	7	12
Whether to pay more or less child maintenance	1	21	0	0	0
Whether to pay child maintenance	1	16	0	0	0
Other	6	5	5	9	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>71</i>

<sup>1</sup> Here, the base for types of support received in the past is all parents who had received professional support in face-to-face meetings apart from those who had received support from a solicitor only, due to the way the questionnaire was designed. Bases are too small to report on benefit/non-benefit NRPs.

In relation to future needs, twice as many non-CSA PWCs (29 per cent) thought they would need help with deciding whether to set up a formal arrangement as the other two groups (17 per cent of CSA NRPs and 14 per cent of CSA PWCs), and a lower proportion – 13 per cent – of non-CSA PWCs (although still twice as many as the other two groups) thought they would need help with deciding whether to make an arrangement at all (Table 4.6). Working out the level of maintenance was also a likely area of need for support for all three groups. In addition, half of CSA PWCs thought they would need help with what to do if they had problems with payments (50 per cent), compared to around a third of the other two groups. Non-benefit CSA PWCs were the most concerned about this (55 per cent compared to 43 per cent of benefit PWCs).

**Table 4.6** Type of support may need in future*Base: All parents who might need formal support in the future*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Whether to set up formal CM arrangement	29	17	14	14	20	16	12
Working out how much CM to pay/receive	34	40	41	43	37	36	44
Whether to make CM arrangement at all	13	7	6	5	9	9	4
Best way to collect or make CM payments	16	14	21	19	10	19	22
Emotional support	10	11	6	14	8	7	6
What to do if have problems with CM payments	32	29	50	30	29	43	55
Whether to accept CM payments	10	0	9	0	0	12	8
Whether to pay more or less CM	0	29	0	29	30	0	0
Whether to pay CM	0	18	0	12	22	0	0
Other	7	7	5	3	11	7	3
Don't know	22	14	16	14	14	18	15
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>366</i>	<i>511</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>213</i>	<i>297</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>514</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>318</i>

The majority of CSA PWCs (59 per cent), and around half of CSA NRPs (51 per cent) and non-CSA PWCs (45 per cent) thought immediately after separation would have been the best time to receive support with making child maintenance arrangements (Table 4.7). Later, once they had dealt with other issues from the separation, was the next most preferred option, although around a fifth of each group felt before separation was the best time.

**Table 4.7 Best time to have received support with child maintenance arrangements**

*Base: All parents who had been in a couple*

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Before separation	20	15	16	11	18	14	18
Immediately after	45	51	59	54	48	57	59
Later	33	35	28	35	35	30	27
No support needed	8	5	2	5	4	3	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>449</i>	<i>592</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>255</i>	<i>244</i>	<i>348</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>451</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>222</i>	<i>373</i>

## 5 Debt and enforcement

Just over half of CSA non-benefit PWCs (54%) were owed child maintenance money by their ex-partner – of those owed maintenance, 40% thought they would agree to accept only some of the full amount owed to them, instead of all of it. The average (mean) proportion PWCs said they would be willing to accept was 48%.

Parents were asked which ways would make sure non-compliant NRPs paid child maintenance (Table 5.1). Most of the enforcement approaches listed were seen as effective by at least 1 in 10 parents in each sample group (parents could select more than one) – deducting the money directly from earnings was mentioned by a high proportion of parents in each group (79% to 92%), and at least a third of parents in each group thought fining would be effective. Once parents were asked which one way they thought would be most effective, deducting the money directly from earnings was identified as such by a large majority (around three-quarters) of each sample group.

**Table 5.1 Enforcement approaches thought to be effective**

*Base: All parents*

	All ways			Most effective way		
	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Deduct the money directly from earnings	87	79	92	78	71	69
Fining the parents that do not pay	45	33	57	7	5	8
A prison sentence	12	12	27	5	8	11
Name and shame	16	17	32	2	3	2
Withdraw the NRP's driving licence	11	10	25	1	1	4
Withdraw the NRP's passport	16	16	30	1	1	2
Put the NRP under curfew	4	7	14	0	1	1
Other	2	4	2	1	3	1
None of these	5	8	1	5	8	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	644	477	622	644	477	619
<i>Unweighted base</i>	644	474	624	644	474	621

