



Research Report

Child Maintenance and  
Enforcement Commission

# Promotion of Child Maintenance: Research on Instigating Behaviour Change

Volume I: Main Report

by Sharon Andrews, David Armstrong, Lorna  
McLernon, Sharon Megaw and Christine Skinner

© Crown copyright 2011.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>

or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This document/publication is also available on our website at:  
<http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/publications/index.html>

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at: Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission,

[www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact](http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact) or  
[www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact/contact.asp](http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact/contact.asp)

First Published 2011.

ISBN            978-1-84947-446-7

Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission or any other Government Department.

This Report has been prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP solely on the instructions of its client, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission. To the extent permitted by law, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, its members, partners, employees and agents specifically disclaim any duty or responsibility to any third party which may view or otherwise access the Report, whether in contract or in tort (including without limitation, negligence and breach of statutory duty) or howsoever otherwise arising, and shall not be liable in respect of any loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature which is caused by or as a consequence of such viewing of or access to the Report by any such third party. Third parties are advised that this Report does not constitute professional advice or a substitute for professional advice, should not be relied on in relation to any business or other decisions or otherwise and is not intended to replace the expertise and judgement of such third parties independent professional advisers.

# CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	I
LIST OF TABLES .....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	IV
AUTHORS .....	VI
GLOSSARY OF TERMS .....	VII
ABBREVIATIONS .....	XI
SUMMARY .....	1
<b>1 WHAT DOES THIS RESEARCH EXAMINE, AND WHY? .....</b>	<b>8</b>
BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE .....	8
1.1 Strategic context .....	8
1.2 Terms of reference .....	9
1.3 Structure of the report.....	10
<b>2 HOW DID WE GO ABOUT UNDERTAKING THIS RESEARCH? .....</b>	<b>12</b>
OVERVIEW OF OUR APPROACH.....	12
2.1 Introduction .....	12
2.2 Stage 1: Desk-based research .....	12
2.3 Stage 2: Qualitative fieldwork .....	13
2.4 Stage 3: Analysis and reporting.....	18
<b>3 WHAT DO WE KNOW FROM EXISTING CHILD SUPPORT LITERATURE? .....</b>	<b>19</b>
A REVIEW OF EXISTING CHILD MAINTENANCE LITERATURE .....	19
3.1 Introduction .....	19
3.2 Affordability .....	19
3.3 Relationships .....	22
3.4 Summary .....	24
<b>4 WHAT DO EXISTING BEHAVIOURAL MODELS TELL US? .....</b>	<b>26</b>
A REVIEW OF EXISTING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE MODELS .....	26
4.1 Introduction .....	26
4.2 Attitudes, beliefs and values.....	26
4.3 Emotions.....	28
4.4 Information.....	29
4.5 Economics .....	30
4.6 Attitude influencers .....	31
4.7 Intentions .....	33
4.8 Towards a conceptual model for child maintenance behaviour .....	34
4.9 Summary .....	36

## CONTENTS

<b>5</b>	<b>WHAT ARE THE KEY DRIVERS OF CHILD MAINTENANCE BEHAVIOUR?</b>	<b>37</b>
	PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS	37
5.1	Introduction	37
5.2	What behaviours are we trying to explain?	38
5.3	Relationships as a driver – research evidence	40
5.4	Emotions as a driver – research evidence	44
5.5	Attitudes as a driver – research evidence	49
5.6	Affordability as a driver – research evidence	52
5.7	Intentions as a driver – research evidence	55
5.8	Towards a prioritisation of the key drivers	57
5.9	Summary	59
<b>6</b>	<b>WHAT OTHER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT?</b>	<b>61</b>
	PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS	61
6.1	Introduction	61
6.2	Attitude influencers	61
6.3	Information	66
6.4	Summary	71
<b>7</b>	<b>WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENCOURAGE CHANGE?</b>	<b>72</b>
	EARLY THOUGHTS ON INTERVENTIONS	72
7.1	Introduction	72
7.2	Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for challenging behaviour	74
7.3	Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for controlling behaviour	78
7.4	Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for accepting behaviour	81
7.5	Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for abdicating behaviour	85
7.6	Summary of interventions	89
	<b>APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	<b>93</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>95</b>

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Overview of the research methodology.....	12
Figure 4.1: Potential drivers of PWC and NRP child maintenance behaviour.....	35
Figure 5.1: Expressed feelings experienced by parents at time of break-up .....	45
Figure 5.2: Prioritisation of drivers of child maintenance behaviour.....	58
Figure 6.1: Information channels .....	70

# LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Outline of number of documents reviewed .....	13
Table 2.2: Outline of issues covered in stakeholder interviews.....	14
Table 2.3: Profile of parent interviewees .....	15
Table 2.4: Outline of issues covered in PWC/NRP interviews .....	16
Table 2.5: Outline of issues covered in case study interviews .....	18
Table 2.6: Outline of workshop questions.....	19
Table 4.1: Attitudinal models reviewed in the desk research .....	27
Table 4.2: Examples of the application of attitudinal models.....	27
Table 4.3: How attitude models can help us understand behaviour in a child maintenance context.	28
Table 4.4: Emotion models reviewed in the desk research .....	28
Table 4.5: Examples of the application of emotion models .....	28
Table 4.6: Application of emotion models to help understand child maintenance behaviour.....	29
Table 4.7: Information models reviewed in the desk research .....	29
Table 4.8: Examples of the application of information models .....	30
Table 4.9: Application of information models to help understand child maintenance behaviour.....	30
Table 4.10: Behavioural economic models reviewed in the desk research.....	30
Table 4.11: Examples of the application of behaviour economic models.....	31
Table 4.12: Behaviour economics models to help understand child maintenance behaviour.....	31
Table 4.13: Some attitude influencer models reviewed in the desk research .....	32
Table 4.14: Examples of the application of attitude influencer models .....	32
Table 4.15: Attitude influencer models to help understand child maintenance behaviour .....	33
Table 4.16: Intentions models reviewed in the desk research .....	33
Table 4.17: Examples of the application of intentions models.....	34
Table 4.18: Intention models to help understand behaviour in a child maintenance context.....	34
Table 5.1: Child maintenance behaviours exhibited among separated parents in this study .....	39
Table 5.2: Key relationship factors affecting child maintenance behaviour in this study .....	44
Table 5.3: Key emotional factors that drives child maintenance behaviour in this study .....	48
Table 5.4: Key factors within attitudes that drive child maintenance behaviour in this study.....	51
Table 5.5: Affordability factors that drive child maintenance behaviour in this study .....	54
Table 5.6: Factors affecting intentions regarding child maintenance behaviour in this study .....	57
Table 7.1: Interventions to combat limited parental relationships .....	75
Table 7.2: Interventions to combat conflict concerning child contact .....	75
Table 7.3: Interventions to combat conflict concerning financial contributions.....	76
Table 7.4: Interventions to combat the negative impact of new partners.....	76
Table 7.5: Interventions to combat strained relationships due to control of child access .....	79
Table 7.6: Interventions to combat NRP concerns regarding PWC use of child maintenance .....	79
Table 7.7: Interventions to combat fluctuating income .....	80
Table 7.8: Interventions to combat NRP desire for privacy .....	80
Table 7.9: Interventions to combat PWCs self-reliance.....	82
Table 7.10: Interventions to combat PWC emotional exhaustion.....	83
Table 7.11: Interventions to combat concerns over finances .....	83
Table 7.12: Interventions to combat concern over welfare of child/ren .....	84

Table 7.13: Interventions to combat limited parental relationships .....	86
Table 7.14: Interventions to combat PWC self-reliance .....	86
Table 7.15: Interventions to combat limited/no emotional bond with child/ren .....	87
Table 7.16: Interventions to combat concerns over the provision of child maintenance.....	88

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was commissioned by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (the Commission). The study team in PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) is grateful to all those who have contributed to this study, in particular the officials at the Commission for their support throughout the research. PwC would also like to thank the parents who participated in the research, gave up their free time and contributed willingly, openly and honestly.



# AUTHORS

**Sharon Andrews** is a researcher at PwC. She is a skilled researcher with experience in all aspects of the research process, in particular desk-based research and qualitative research methods including depth interviews. Sharon previously worked for a Health Trust during which time she built up considerable knowledge in the monitoring and evaluation of performance within the Trust.

**Dr David Armstrong** is a Director at PwC, and a highly experienced researcher and evaluator. He has led a wide range of projects across the fields of education and social policy. Most recently, David led PwC's research work for DWP in evaluating the Department's welfare to work commissioning strategy and the CSA client insight study to better understand the client base and their experiences of CSA service delivery. David has a PhD in economics and statistics from Warwick University, and has published widely on a range of empirical and evaluation issues in leading national and international journals.

**Lorna McLernon** is a researcher at PwC. She has 10 years research experience and during her time at PwC has been involved in a variety of quantitative and qualitative research studies including the design of qualitative methods and the use of projective and empowering techniques. Lorna has considerable experience of conducting client insight research in the public sector; she is particularly experienced in conducting research on sensitive issues with hard to reach groups.

**Sharon Megaw** is a senior researcher at PwC with specific expertise in client insight research and service evaluation. Sharon is a highly skilled and experienced research manager and has over 12 year's research experience, gained from working in academia and the public and private sectors. Sharon's particular area of expertise is in customer centric service evaluation using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Most recently in this policy space, she managed the CSA client insight study, undertaken to better understand the CSA client base and their experiences of CSA service delivery.

**Dr Christine Skinner** is a senior lecturer in social policy in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of York. She has extensive expertise in researching child support policy since the implementation of the first Child Support Act in 1993. She was a key member of the research team which conducted the first national survey of separated fathers in 1999 and was the lead researcher in conducting the related in-depth qualitative study on understanding the nature of financial obligations. Recently she acted as an expert advisor to the Social Security Select Committee inquiry into the latest White Paper, A new System of Child Maintenance, and on the DWP's 'Relationship Breakdown' survey (2008). Most recently she completed an international comparison of child support systems in 14 countries as part of the DWP's research programme informing policy change.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abdicating behaviour*	Where parents believe it is someone else's responsibility to provide child maintenance.
Accepting behaviour*	Where parents with care are unhappy with child maintenance arrangement/no child maintenance arrangement but accept the status quo so as not to upset/worsen the co-parent relationship.
Attitude influencer	People (usually family and friends) or third party organisations who have an influence over the parent and their decisions.
Attitudinal models	Behavioural change theories which highlight the role of attitudes, beliefs and values.
Challenging behaviour*	Where parents are not happy with the existing child maintenance arrangements and challenge the other parent to change their arrangement going forward.
Child Maintenance Options	An impartial information and support service to help parents make decisions about child maintenance arrangements.
Citizens Advice Bureau	A charity which helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.

---

\* Conceptualised behaviour; the conceptualisation involved researchers applying description categories externally through analysis – interviewees did not use these words to describe themselves or their behaviour. It is important to note that behaviours exhibited at the time of the research are not necessarily fixed and are subject to change.

Controlling behaviour*	Where non-resident parents do not trust the parents with care to allocate child maintenance to the child/ren or are the primary decision maker in the nature of the child maintenance arrangements.
Case studies	Depth interviews with friends/family/other parent, which encapsulate social, behavioural and attitudinal factors, illustrate common experience and give further insight into parent behaviour.
Full-time work	Where a person is in employment for more than 30 hours per week.
Future scheme	The future statutory service which will replace the CSA.
Gingerbread	A charity which works for and with single parent families to improve their lives.
Group 1**	Parents who have no form of child maintenance support in place for their children.
Group 2**	Parents who have some form of child maintenance support in place excluding shared care and regular agreed exchange of money for a child/ren.
Group 3**	Parents who have a regular agreed exchange of money and/or shared care arrangements in place for a child/ren.
Informal support	Other forms of support provided instead of child maintenance payments e.g. clothes, shoes, food, toys, presents and pocket money.
Non-Resident Parent	The parent who lives in a separate household from the child/ren.

---

\* Conceptualised behaviour; the conceptualisation involved researchers applying description categories externally through analysis – interviewees did not use these words to describe themselves or their behaviour. It is important to note that behaviours exhibited at the time of the research are not necessarily fixed and are subject to change.

\*\* This is not a formally recognised grouping. It is phrasing applied to this type of arrangement for the purposes of this study to facilitate recruitment.

Negative child maintenance behaviour	Parents whose child maintenance behaviour is either no arrangement or no regular agreed exchange of money and/or shared care arrangements in place for a child/ren.
Parent With Care	The parent who lives in the same household as the child/ren for whom maintenance has been applied for/or is being paid.
Part-time work	Where a person is in employment for 30 hours per week or less.
Private arrangement	An arrangement which both the PWC and NRP have come to by themselves without involving the CSA.
Providing behaviour*	Where the non-resident parent is keen to contribute to child maintenance.
Psychodrawing	A projective technique in which participants are asked to draw in abstract form, something relevant to the research project.
Receiving behaviour	Child maintenance is contributed by the non-resident parent and the parent with care is happy with the arrangement.
Resolution	A national organisation of family lawyers committed to non-confrontational divorce, separation and other family problems.
Shared care	When both parents share care of the child/ren on an equal basis.
Statutory arrangement	An arrangement which is set up with the help of the Courts or CSA to ensure separated parents set-up appropriate support for their child in line with their income.

---

\* Conceptualised behaviour; the conceptualisation involved researchers applying description categories externally through analysis – interviewees did not use these words to describe themselves or their behaviour. It is important to note that behaviours exhibited at the time of the research are not necessarily fixed and are subject to change.

# ABBREVIATIONS

AIDA	Awareness Interest Decision Action
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CMEC	Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission
CSA	Child Support Agency
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
NRP	Non-Resident Parent
ELM	Petty & Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
PWC	Parent with Care
TRA	Fishbein & Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action
VBN	Stern et al's Values Beliefs and Norms Theory

# SUMMARY

## Background

In early 2006, Sir David Henshaw was asked by then Secretary of State, John Hutton to develop a proposal for the redesign of the child maintenance system. Making the Child Support System Work Better (2006, DWP), found that the current system was not working and recommended widespread changes to the child maintenance system. The government response mapped out a new approach to child maintenance based on four principles: help tackle child poverty; promote parental responsibility; provide a cost effective and professional service; and, be simple and transparent.

Part of the government response to the Henshaw report was the establishment of The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (the Commission) which formally came into existence in July 2008. The Commission takes responsibility for the child maintenance system in Great Britain. Its primary objective is to maximise the number of effective child maintenance arrangements in place for children who live apart from one or both of their parents, arranged privately or through the statutory scheme.

## Terms of reference

In March 2009, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) was commissioned by the Commission, with involvement from the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division in Northern Ireland, to undertake a programme of research to help understand the behaviour of parents with no formal child maintenance arrangements in place. Specifically, the research programme was tasked with identifying and prioritising:

1. Individual and contextual factors associated with having no formal child maintenance arrangement; and
2. Levers for behaviour change (interventions) across the population and its sub-groups.

## Methodology

The programme of research used a mixed methodology of primary and secondary research to address the main objectives of the study. Desk research and stakeholder interviews were conducted to investigate the depth and range of factors likely to affect child maintenance behaviour and to explore potential behaviour change models which might be useful in the context of child maintenance. The hypotheses explaining child maintenance behaviour, which were established as an output of the desk research, were tested through primary research with parents and others in the close parental social circle such as mothers, fathers, friends and the co-parent. A workshop was held with personnel from the Commission to explore a suite of proposed interventions aimed at initiating change in negative child maintenance behaviours.

## Overview of key findings

### *What do we know from existing child support literature?*

The analysis of existing literature suggests there are a number of contributing factors that lead to the non-payment of child maintenance. These factors can be grouped into two main categories, affordability factors and relationship factors.

Affordability relates to a number of income factors including: source and level of income and employment status. Alongside this, a number of underlying factors impact on whether a formal arrangement is in place, specifically informal<sup>1</sup> payments and capital settlements.

The desk research found evidence that the status of the relationship (past and present) can have an impact on whether a child maintenance arrangement is put in place. The literature suggests that parents with care (PWCs) that had been in a casual or short-term relationship were not as likely to have an arrangement in place when compared with parents who had previously been married. Furthermore, the more friendly the relationship between the parents and the less restrictions placed on non-resident parent (NRP) - child contact, the more likely it is for an effective arrangement to be in place.

### *What do existing behavioural models tell us?*

A review of existing behavioural models found no evidence of particular models being applied in a child maintenance context. However, a number of principles underpinning behaviour change models might be applied to explain child maintenance behaviour. The principles describe groups of models and the most appropriate were considered to be:

- Attitudinal models which suggest that behaviour outcomes and the self evaluation of those outcomes determine an individual's attitude to the behaviour;
- Emotion models take into consideration how emotions are affected by the formation of intentions and consequently the behaviours exhibited;
- Information models which focus on rational choice as the basis of the role of information in understanding behaviour outcomes;
- Behaviour economic models which highlight the influence of decision making on behaviours concerning finance;
- Attitude influencer models which highlight how the role of others can affect an individual's feelings about performing certain behaviours; and
- Intention models which illustrate the role of intentions in influencing behaviours and how they can affect the individual's decision.

---

<sup>1</sup> Informal support includes the provision of other forms of support instead of child maintenance payments, such as: clothes, shoes, food, toys, presents and pocket money.

### ***What are the key drivers of child maintenance behaviour?***

The primary research (parent interviews) evidence suggests there are six core child maintenance behaviours, found across both PWCs and NRPs. Within these six behaviours there are two positive behaviours: receiving<sup>2</sup> and providing<sup>3</sup>, with the remaining four being negative child maintenance behaviours including: challenging<sup>4</sup>; accepting<sup>5</sup>; controlling<sup>6</sup>; and abdicating<sup>7</sup>.

It is important to note that the behaviours described, and their expression across PWCs and NRPs, are a description of the behaviour being exhibited by the parent towards the maintenance arrangement, and at the point in time of the research. It must be recognised also that the behaviour of one parent does not happen in isolation and is likely to be a function of interactions with the other co-parent (both in the past and present), where a co-parent is in contact. Behaviours exhibited at the time of the research are not necessarily fixed and are subject to change. As the drivers of behaviour may change, then the behaviours exhibited may also change.

The research suggests that there are five common drivers of child maintenance behaviour, these are: relationships; emotions; attitudes, beliefs and values; affordability and intentions. The research suggests that there are a number of key factors within each driver that influence child maintenance behaviours.

#### *Relationships*

The research suggests that the past and present amicability of the PWC-NRP relationship is an important predictor of the success of child maintenance arrangement. The ability of parents to talk amicably, putting aside their differences for the needs of their children and agreement between parents on child contact, can positively impact on arrangements and was evident amongst those parents who exhibited positive behaviours.

Those parents with no arrangement in place and who were exhibiting negative behaviours reported having limited or no contact with the other parent and in some cases no contact with the child. Where contact did exist, relationships were considered to be strained or fraught.

#### *Emotions*

Emotions run high for parents when a relationship ends. There are a wide range of feelings present. In particular, feelings of sadness, anger, resentment and frustration, were reported

---

<sup>2</sup> Child maintenance contributed by the NRP, where the PWC is happy with arrangements.

<sup>3</sup> Where the NRP is keen to contribute child maintenance.

<sup>4</sup> Where parents are not happy with the existing arrangements and challenge the other parent to change their arrangement going forward.

<sup>5</sup> Accepting child maintenance contributed by the NRP, where PWCs are unhappy with arrangements and accept the status quo due to a desire not to upset/worsen co-parent relationships.

<sup>6</sup> Where the NRPs do not trust the PWC to allocate child maintenance to the child/ren or are the primary decision maker in nature of the support arrangements.

<sup>7</sup> Where parents believe it is someone else's responsibility to provide child maintenance.



by most parents who participated in the primary research. The emotional response, by the parents, to the separation is a driver of the type of child maintenance behaviour exhibited and may determine whether an arrangement is considered at the time of separation or put to one side for a period of time until the individual is less emotional.

In some cases, emotional exhaustion can lead parents to exhibit an accepting behaviour due to constant arguing and frustration, with the NRP never following through with promises to provide financial support. This research also indicates that the passage of time entrenches the initial behaviours exhibited by separated parents; therefore despite emotional difficulties early child maintenance set-up is critical. The research findings endorse this view with most providing and receiving behaviours put in place close to the time of break-up; consequently these early positive behaviours became the norm over time.

#### *Attitudes, beliefs and values*

Attitudes, beliefs and values are formed by parents based on their personal circumstances and experiences. There was universal support, amongst those interviewed within this study, for the principle of paying child maintenance; however, many viewed their own situation as the exception to the rule. For instance some PWCs were proud that they have been self-reliant to this point and therefore had no aspirations to pursue child maintenance from the NRP but still considered the provision of child maintenance “the right thing to do”.

#### *Affordability*

The research suggests that the level of income is not the key factor influencing the existence of a child maintenance arrangement. Research findings indicate that the capacity to pay does not necessarily mean that there is a willingness to pay. For some NRPs their own personal needs were prioritised over the needs of their child/ren whereas other NRPs sacrificed their own personal needs to provide child maintenance because they morally felt that they should and wanted to regardless of their financial struggle.

#### *Intentions*

Intentions describe the actions a parent plans to take in relation to child maintenance. There are many PWCs who expressed positive intentions to put in place a more structured, reliable child maintenance arrangement but intentions were thwarted by fear of consequences; such as the fear of how the NRP would react to such requests and whether their reaction would impact on the NRP-child relationship. The negative legacy of the CSA, fuelled by many negative stories reported by friends, family and work colleagues lead most separated parents in the study to believe that the CSA should only be used as a last resort. In most cases, these negative views hampered intentions to seek/provide child maintenance.

The research evidence suggests a prioritisation of the behaviours with relationships, emotions and attitudes as the key drivers of child maintenance behaviour. Affordability and intentions alone are not key drivers for child maintenance behaviour but they work alongside the other drivers to influence whether or not arrangements are put in place.

It is important to be aware that the prioritisation of these five behaviour drivers may vary depending on the type of child maintenance behaviour present. The more positive each of the drivers are, the more likely it is that a positive child maintenance arrangement exists.

Without exception, the research findings indicate that early intervention is critical and on-going management of relationships particularly in times of change is vital.

***What other contextual factors are important?***

Broadly speaking, the research findings indicate that information and attitude influencers are two important factors related to behaviour. They do not in themselves drive behaviour but are important contextual and empowering factors.

*Attitude influencers*

PWCs and NRPs cited family and friends as the most common attitude influencers. Third party influencers such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and solicitors/lawyers were also mentioned.

Emotional support was the most common type of help provided to separated parents. Attitude influencers could be grouped into two types: those that provide more passive support through roles such as listener, comforter and realiser; and those that provided more proactive support through the roles of informer, prompter and reassurer.

Most parents, in particular PWCs, mentioned receiving practical support from family and friends, including: help with the payment of household bills and/or purchase child related items; assistance with day childcare to enable parent to work; and babysitting to enable parent to socialise with friends.

The extent to which attitude influencers affect behaviour is unclear. Views expressed in parent interviews suggest behaviour and decision making is theirs solely and this is supported by attitude influencer interviews. However, analysis of secondary and primary research suggests that strong bonds exist between some attitude influencers (mostly mothers) and separated parents. In these circumstances, behaviours may be subject to some influence which is not consciously recognised.

*Information*

There was widespread confusion amongst separated parents, with most parents stating that they were not aware of where to source relevant information or indeed the types of information available to them.

The evidence suggests that some separated parents are more proactive with regards to sourcing information than others; NRPs that have regular child maintenance arrangements were better informed than other separated parents. For some, feelings of shame and embarrassment prevented them from seeking information, for others it was their desire for privacy or to control arrangements which stopped them seeking information.

A range of existing touchpoints were identified as possible information channels, most notably, attitude influencers, trusted professionals and voluntary organisations. Empowering these touchpoints with information is a way to help separated parents to make informed decisions and proactively seek an effective child maintenance arrangement.

***What can be done to affect change?***

Based on the insights generated through the primary research, a suite of interventions were proposed to address negative child maintenance behaviours. These interventions were grouped into four broad categories:

- Support;
- Communication;
- Policy; and
- Advice.

***Support***

There are a range of relationship issues identified within the research such as; negative NRP-PWC behaviour, restricted child access and strained co-parenting relationships that would gain from individual mentoring and counselling sessions to deal with the underlying issues. For some relationships there may also be a need for follow-on mediation sessions to help parents to rebuild their co-parenting relationship.

Separated parents experience a wide range of emotions, talking through these emotions with a third party could help parents to cope and develop negotiation skills or communication skills and help them to take a step towards more positive child maintenance behaviour. These support services could be provided by a third party organisation, advertised through the Child Maintenance Options service and supported by a tailored social marketing campaign to ensure a widespread coverage.

***Marketing / Communications Activity***

There is a role for communications to address and influence the negative behaviours associated with child maintenance. The requirement will vary during different stages of the behaviour change journey and it's important that it is framed in context of other interventions.

The role for communication is yet to be defined but it is likely to address the following:

1. Parents who agree with the principles of child maintenance but consider themselves exempt;
2. Demonstrate what positive child maintenance behaviour looks like and the benefits of formalised arrangements;
3. Dispel the negative attitudes towards payment of child maintenance and former CSA service characteristics; and
4. Promote the Child Maintenance Options service as a first port of call for information and advice.

### *Policy*

In some cases parents in the study felt that support services were not sufficient on their own for various reasons such as NRP refusal to make payments, whereabouts of NRP unknown, or, PWC fear of NRP involvement. Consequently, this may require the introduction of statutory policy. Possible policy interventions include the provision of financial incentives to separated parents such as a 'first mover' reward for PWCs, this would provide these parents with special tax breaks or top-up their child benefit allowance as an incentive to put an arrangement in place.

### *Advice*

Most separated parents in the study face financial issues during a separation and in some cases incur a substantial amount of debt. There is a need for some separated parents to receive financial planning advice to help them to manage their financial situation, particularly at the time of the break-up, and to prioritise their income to ensure their child/ren's needs come first and that child maintenance payments are made.

In addition to these support services there are information gaps in areas such as: how much it costs to raise a child; knowing your statutory rights; and how to minimise the impact of a separation on a child. Separated parents would benefit from the provision of general advice and information in these areas. This advice would help to manage parent's expectations and empower them with knowledge to confidently take steps towards displaying more positive child maintenance behaviours in the future.

### ***Where do we go from here?***

The Commission are now at the point of considering the implications of the research findings for the Commission's strategy going forward. This piece of research has examined the findings which emerged from the qualitative parent depth interviews and case study interviews with regard to behaviour change interventions. The four negative behaviours were then considered in detail, exploring the research insights and linking these insights with practical interventions that might be considered going forward.

PwC would recommend that a further programme of qualitative research is commissioned to test and develop the proposed interventions with the target population through deliberative focus groups. This research will allow the Commission to start to assess the interventions in terms of:

- Relevance to the negative behaviour exhibited;
- Content;
- Ease of implementation;
- How the target audience can be made aware of/encouraged to participate in the intervention;
- Expected impact of intervention; and
- Indicative cost of implementing the intervention.

These deliberative groups will provide the Commission with further insights into how the interventions might look and how they should be delivered. These insights will allow the Commission to make an informed choice of which interventions are most appropriate to take forward to the pilot stage.

# 1 WHAT DOES THIS RESEARCH EXAMINE, AND WHY?

## BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1.1 Strategic context

In July 2006, a review of the child maintenance system was undertaken by Sir David Henshaw, with the aim of developing a proposal for the reform and redesign of the current system. The report found that the current system was not working effectively and recommended extensive changes.

The government response, A New System of Child Maintenance (DWP, 2006) outlined the new approach to child maintenance aimed at empowering parents to make their own arrangements and strengthen enforcement powers to prevent parents from failing to provide financially for their children. The report stated that:

*'For the sake of the children concerned, there is a clear need for fundamental reform of both child maintenance policy and its delivery. This means new arrangements should be put in place that work with parents to deliver the best outcomes for their children.'*

The new approach to child maintenance will be delivered through the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (the Commission), which came into existence in July 2008.

The objective of the Commission is to:

*'Maximise the number of effective maintenance arrangements that are in place to support children who live apart from one or both of their parents.'*

Underpinning this, the Commission has three principal functions:

1. To promote the importance of parental responsibility for the establishment and payment of child maintenance by parents that live apart;
2. To provide an impartial information and support service to support parents to put in place maintenance arrangements that best suit their family's needs; and
3. To provide a statutory maintenance service to assess, collect and enforce the payment of maintenance on parents' behalf.

Research suggests that public opinion supports the view that parents should provide for their children financially<sup>8</sup> however, findings on parental behaviour in relation to child maintenance suggests that a disparity exists between attitudes and behaviour.

The Commission is tasked with instigating positive behaviour change to encourage those parents that live apart and do not have child maintenance arrangements in place, to initiate an arrangement. The long-term goal is to create a cultural shift where the non-payment of child maintenance is no longer socially acceptable. In order to fulfil this remit, the Commission needs to understand the drivers affecting the behaviour of relevant parents and identify which of those it can influence to encourage a change in child maintenance behaviour. Furthermore, the Commission needs practical ideas for instigating behaviour change in order to fulfil its remit.

It is within the context of using insight research to underpin behaviour change that this study has been commissioned.

## 1.2 Terms of reference

The main aim of this study was to identify and understand how parents who live apart from their children can be encouraged and helped to put in place a child maintenance arrangement. In March 2009, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) was commissioned by the Commission, with involvement from the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division in Northern Ireland, to undertake a programme of research to help understand the behaviour of parents with no formal<sup>9</sup> child maintenance arrangements in place.

The terms of reference include two main objectives:

1. Identify and prioritise individual and contextual factors associated with having no formal child maintenance arrangement<sup>10</sup>; and
2. Identify and prioritise levers for behaviour change across the population and its sub-groups.

---

<sup>8</sup> British Social Attitudes Survey, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this study, a formal arrangement is interpreted as one made through the CSA, Courts Service or an agreed private arrangement.

<sup>10</sup> Separated parents with formal arrangements in place were included in the study to allow comparison. This is explained further in chapter 2.

A detailed copy of the terms of reference can be found in Appendix 1.

### 1.3 Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: How did we go about undertaking this research? (Overview of our approach);
- Chapter 3: What do we know from existing child support literature? (A review of existing child maintenance literature);
- Chapter 4: What do existing behavioural models tell us? (A review of existing behavioural change models);
- Chapter 5: What are the key drivers of child maintenance behaviour? (Primary research findings);
- Chapter 6: What other contextual factors are important? (Primary research findings);
- Chapter 7: What can be done to encourage change? (Early thoughts on interventions);
- Appendix 1: Terms of reference; and
- Appendix 2: Bibliography.

In addition to this report a second volume (Volume II: Technical Report) incorporating detailed analyses from parent interviews and case studies has been compiled and is available separately.

The Technical report provides detailed analysis and direct quotations from the primary research and can be used to complement the findings contained within this report. The qualitative research findings captured during the separated parent interviews are summarised under the headings of the key drivers of child maintenance behaviour: Emotions; Attitudes, Beliefs and Values; Affordability; Intentions; and Attitude Influencers.

The Technical Report also presents the analysis from the case studies developed from the depth interviews and supplementary research with family and friends. Within each case study information is presented including: background information, child maintenance arrangements and key findings related to the main themes of the research.

The final element in the Technical Report presents how the research insights link specifically to suggestions around practical interventions that might be considered. It does this by taking each negative behaviour<sup>11</sup> (Challenging, Abdicating, Controlling and Accepting) as a case study and considering the detailed insights from the research in the context of the previously identified behavioural drivers.

---

<sup>11</sup> Negative behaviours are those behaviours which are not seen as being favourable in terms of providing or receiving child maintenance support.

These insights are then linked to interventions – the interventions noted cover both those raised by participants during the research and those considered as potentially appropriate by PWC.



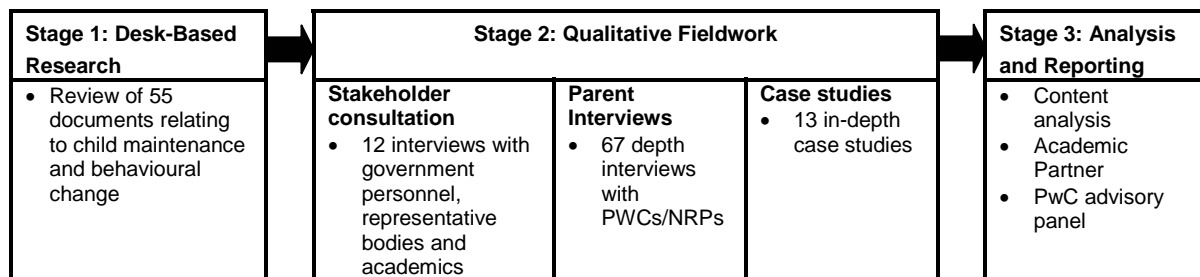
# 2 HOW DID WE GO ABOUT UNDERTAKING THIS RESEARCH?

## OVERVIEW OF OUR APPROACH

### 2.1 Introduction

The methodology for this research was completed in stages using a mix of primary and secondary research to address the main objectives of the research. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the methodological approach.

**Figure 2.1: Overview of the research methodology**



### 2.2 Stage 1: Desk-based research

The initial stage of the research programme involved the completion of an extensive review of relevant child maintenance and behaviour change literature.

The purpose of the desk-based research was to establish:

- The social, personal, demographic and financial factors related to child maintenance behaviour, specifically in relation to non-arrangement or non-payment of maintenance;
- The longitudinal impact of maintenance behaviour on children’s outcomes; and

- Whether a behaviour change model existed that could be applied to child maintenance or whether elements of other models could be used to develop a bespoke model.

The research was completed using resources nominated by the Commission, the academic partner (Dr Christine Skinner, University of York)<sup>12</sup>, and a comprehensive internet search was undertaken to identify relevant documents. Documents were selected according to their relevance to child maintenance (in particular, individual and contextual factors associated with the payment and non-payment of child maintenance) and current thinking on behaviour models and theories of change. A total of 55 documents relating to child maintenance and behaviour change were reviewed, a full bibliography is contained in Appendix 2.

Documents were categorised as per their relevance to the purpose of the desk-based research. Table 2.1 outlines the categorisation and the number of documents reviewed.

**Table 2.1: Outline of number of documents reviewed**

Category	Number of documents reviewed
Child maintenance	18
Behaviour change	22
Impact of maintenance on children	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

## 2.3 Stage 2: Qualitative fieldwork

### 2.3.1 Stakeholder consultation

Subsequent to the desk-based research, a phase of stakeholder consultation was undertaken with a number of cross-sectoral stakeholders, specifically those involved in drafting and implementing behaviour change policy.

A series of semi-structured depth telephone interviews were undertaken with a total of 13 stakeholders including, government personnel,<sup>13</sup> representative bodies<sup>14</sup> and academics involved in the field of behaviour change. Topic guides were designed for each set of stakeholders and tailored for individual interviews. Table 2.2 outlines some of the topics covered with each set of interviewees.

A full copy of each topic guide can be found in Volume II: Technical Report (available separately).

<sup>12</sup> Christine Skinner is a distinguished academic in the field of child support policy redesign. Christine provided a challenge function to the research team by critiquing and reviewing materials and suggestions from the core research team.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Health, Home Office, DWP Pension Reform, National Social Marketing Centre, and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

<sup>14</sup> The Centre for Separated Families, Citizens Advice Bureau, Gingerbread, Families Need Fathers, Resolution and Relate.

**Table 2.2: Outline of issues covered in stakeholder interviews**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Question areas</b>
Government representatives	<p>What was the specific behaviour you were targeting with your work?</p> <p>How did you identify appropriate models?</p> <p>How did you develop behaviour change interventions and communications activity?</p> <p>What impact did the selected (or developed) behaviour change model have on your communications channel planning and the messaging content?</p> <p>What measurement criteria did you put in place, (e.g. bespoke KPI's) to determine the effectiveness of your behaviour change initiatives?</p> <p>Did you use response based communications to encourage target audience participation?</p> <p>What steps did you take to ensure models selected were relevant to the target audience?</p> <p>How were interventions tested?</p>
Representative bodies	<p>What type of service do parents with care (PWCs)/non-resident parents (NRPs) look for from your organisation?</p> <p>Is there a difference between PWCs/NRPs in terms of services requested?</p> <p>Are there any common difficulties in arranging or maintaining child maintenance?</p> <p>Are you aware of any common attitudes amongst PWCs/NRPs who do not have a child maintenance arrangement in place?</p> <p>What types of interventions should be implemented to encourage PWCs/NRPs to put a child maintenance arrangement in place (either statutory or private)?</p> <p>What are the main barriers facing PWCs that prevents them from putting a child maintenance arrangement in place?</p> <p>How can these barriers be overcome?</p>
Academics	<p>How do you suggest we tackle segmenting this population using qualitative data?</p> <p>Did any of your previous studies involve conducting case studies? Are there any key points for consideration for using this approach?</p> <p>What are the key areas for consideration when developing behaviour change interventions?</p>

### **2.3.2 Parent interviews**

This section outlines the approach to the qualitative research with parents. The desk-based research and the stakeholder consultation provided crucial insights into the main attributes of child maintenance behaviour including the key theoretical and practical components of behaviour change. This provided a strong knowledge platform for the parent phase of the research.

The purpose of primary research with this group was two-fold:

- To verify and validate the outputs of the desk-based research and earlier qualitative research; and
- To collect new and in-depth evidence on the personal, inter-personal, social and behaviour factors which impact on child maintenance behaviour.

Qualitative research is used to help us understand how people feel and why they feel as they do. It is concerned with collecting in-depth information asking questions such as why do you say that? The qualitative research undertaken within this project served to provide genuine insights and real life examples of the views and experiences of 67 separated parents. These insights identified 6 child maintenance behaviours prevalent within this population of interest. It is important to note that these are not an exhaustive list of behaviours across the separated parent population but a typology of the most common ones found in this sample.

Following considerable discussion with the Commission, it was agreed that research participants should be drawn from the non-CSA separated parent population and include parents with a variety of arrangement types in place (largely because factors relating to involvement with the CSA may have affected arrangement decisions). Three specific target groups were identified for recruitment in this phase of the research:

- **Group 1:** Parents who have no form of support in place for their child/ren;
- **Group 2:** Parents who have some form of support in place excluding shared care and regular agreed exchange of money for a child/ren; and
- **Group 3:** Parents who have a regular agreed exchange of money and/or shared care arrangements in place for a child/ren.

The purpose of including parents with a variety of arrangement types was to facilitate the learning of lessons about behaviour in the case of both effective and ineffective arrangements. Other profile factors considered were, age, parent with care (PWC) / non-resident parent (NRP), length of time separated and income.

Table 2.3 outlines the achieved profile of interviewees.

**Table 2.3: Profile of parent interviewees**

	Group			Length of separation			Age		Income		Total
	1	2	3	<1 year	1-5 years	>5 years	18-35	36+	Less than £18,000	More than £18,000	
<b>NRP</b>	12	12	10	6	18	10	16	18	23	11	34
<b>PWC</b>	12	12	9	6	21	6	19	14	15	18	33
<b>All</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>67</b>

A core topic guide was designed which was tailored for use with NRPs and PWCs during the fieldwork. The topic guide was used during discussions as a guide for parents to maintain the focus of the discussion and to ensure all issues were covered.

The objectives of the research, the findings from the desk-based research and stakeholder consultation were used as a basis for the design of the topic guide. The topic guide was refined with input from the academic advisory partner and the Commission.

Table 2.4 provides an outline of questions covered during the parent depth interviews. A fully copy of the NRP/PWC topic guide is contained in Part 6 of Volume II: Technical Report (available separately).

**Table 2.4: Outline of issues covered in PWC/NRP interviews**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Question areas</b>
<b>Contextual Information</b>	How many children do you have? Who do the children live with? Are they from one relationship? Were you previously married/cohabitating/not living together? How long have you been separated?
<b>Break-up information</b>	Drawing exercise. Why did the relationship end? What were the immediate changes? What were the arrangements at this point? What did you think the other parents financial responsibilities to the children were? Can you remember when you discussed/sorted out arrangements concerning the children? Were any of these support arrangements put in writing? How easy or difficult was it to talk with the other parent about making support arrangements for the children?
<b>Support</b>	Did you get support from anyone at that time about the separation or matters relating to the children? Who did you go to for support and about what issue? Did you work out what you were entitled to based on CSA calculations? Did you use the internet for advice? What degree of influence did they [other significant people in your life] have on what you've done? How would you describe what you are like in terms of seeking support? Could any organisation have given you support/more support?
<b>Current situation</b>	Drawing exercise. What are your current child maintenance arrangements? Are any of these support arrangements in writing? What would you say were the major changes regarding arrangements for the children since the break-up? Have there been any difficulties which you have had to overcome? How do you think the current support arrangement affects your children? How do you feel about your current support arrangement?
<b>Future</b>	Do you plan to make any changes to your current child maintenance arrangements? How do you think that change can be made to happen? How easy/difficult would it be to make that change? How will that desired change affect your children/you/the other parent? How will not making any changes to child maintenance affect the children/you/the other parent? Do you agree that the other parent has an obligation to pay child maintenance?

The depth interviews incorporated a number of drawing exercises<sup>15</sup> to help participants illustrate their feelings at certain times.

A recruitment questionnaire was developed to ensure that participants met the stated criteria for participation in the research. The Commission approved this questionnaire prior to commencement of recruitment. A copy of this questionnaire is included in Part 6 of Volume II: Technical Report (available separately).

Recruitment was completed via a free find specialist recruitment agency and interviewees were incentivised to encourage participation. A total of 67 depth interviews<sup>16</sup> were completed with the aim of collecting data on a broad range of circumstances and experiences associated with child maintenance behaviour.

To ensure attendance, each participant was telephoned twice prior to the interview by the recruiter. One call took place at the start of the week to remind the participant of all the details and ensure that they were still willing to attend. A second call took place the day before the interview, to ensure that the participant was still planning to attend.

All interviews lasted approximately two hours and were completed by an experienced member of the core fieldwork team. All discussions were recorded upon gaining permission from the participants and detailed transcripts were produced. This allowed for accurate collation of views and opinions and the identification of direct quotations to support the analysis of the findings.

### **2.3.3 Case studies**

Depth interviews were supplemented by 13 case studies. The aim of the case studies was to understand, through the eyes of those close to research participants, the evolution of circumstances and experiences leading to the current child maintenance situation. These interviews were also used to explore the role of others in influencing the behaviours of interviewees.

Participants were asked to nominate family and friends, with whom they talk about personal issues, who would be willing to be interviewed by the fieldwork team. Case studies involved an average of three interviews which took the form of a semi-structured depth interview<sup>17</sup> and lasted between 30-60 minutes. To encourage their involvement each case study participant was incentivised.

Table 2.5 provides an overview of areas explored during case study interviews. A full topic guide is available in Volume II: Technical Report.

---

<sup>15</sup> Pyschodrawing is a projective technique in which participants are asked to draw, in abstract form, something relevant to the research project. These drawings are usually described and interpreted by respondents themselves as part of the subsequent discussion, and this explanation is a highly valuable data collection process itself.

<sup>16</sup> Interviews were predominantly face-to-face, as after piloting this method was most appropriate for the nature of the subject matter. Only three interviews were completed via telephone.

<sup>17</sup> For the most part telephone interviews as determined by the pilot.

**Table 2.5: Outline of issues covered in case study interviews**

<b>Case study</b>	<b>Question areas</b>
PWC/NRP	<p>Around the time of the break-up what were the immediate changes for you? Were any of these changes concerning you/worrying you more than others? Can you remember when you discussed/sorted out arrangements concerning the children? Did you get support from anyone at that time about the separation or matters relating to the children? What degree of influence did they have on what you've done? How would you describe what you are like in terms of seeking support?</p>
Friends/family	<p>When did you become aware that [name of PWC's or NRP's] relationship with the other parent was coming to an end? Do you know why they separated? How did you feel about why the relationship ended? How did the ending of the relationship make you feel? What support, (if any) did you provide at the break-up stage of the separation/time of the birth? How was this support/advice received by [name of PWC and/or NRP]? And how did you feel about providing this advice? In your opinion, was the advice you provided acted on? What involvement did you have with the other parent at the time of the break-up?</p>

## **2.4 Stage 3: Analysis and reporting**

This section outlines the activities undertaken as part of the analysis and reporting phase of the research.

### **2.4.1 Content analysis**

Research analysis was an ongoing process throughout the programme of research. Analysis was carried out sequentially once activities were completed to facilitate reflection on findings to date. Analysis of parent interviews was completed at three intervals to help with the examination of findings. After the completion of all the depth interviews, facilitators completed a summary sheet outlining the key findings aligned with the main themes. A detailed transcription of the interview was also developed for more in depth analysis. All primary research was completed using the content analysis approach. The academic advisory partner provided input throughout the research to assess the evidence collected.

### **2.4.2 Interventions workshop**

Drawing on the evidence collected at earlier stages of the research, a number of intervention options were proposed to instigate positive child maintenance behaviour within the target population. A workshop was designed to explore these intervention options further. The workshop was attended by:

- Commission representatives with a dedicated role to play in the design and implementation of proposed options, such as representatives from strategy and policy, communications and service delivery;

- PwC Advisory panel members with core experience of drawing up and implementing options similar to those under discussion; and
- Core research team members, whose proximity to the primary research with parents was valuable in verifying and validating the options in light of evidence gathered from the target population.

Attendees were asked to consider the options presented and determine which of these might best address the behaviours for change. Table 2.6 highlights the key questions used during the workshop discussion.

**Table 2.6: Outline of workshop questions**

Questions
<b>Relevance of the intervention to the behaviour in the target segment:</b> How likely is a given intervention to address the common behaviour in the segment?
<b>Content of the intervention:</b> What might the detail of the intervention look like? Five key elements.
<b>Ease of implementation:</b> Is there already a network or support organisation in place that could assist with the delivery of the intervention or does it require the creation of a new delivery mechanism?
<b>Hooks:</b> How could the target segment be reached/made aware of/encouraged to participate in interventions?
<b>Impact of intervention:</b> Expected impact of introducing interventions; will it cause a high or low impact on the behaviours of interest?
<b>Cost of intervention:</b> The level of investment required to implement the intervention; will it require high or low investment over a short or long period of time?

### **2.4.3 Reporting**

Throughout the programme of research, presentations were submitted to the steering groups at key milestones in the project, as outlined below:

- **Milestone 1:** Findings from the desk-based research including the proposition of a conceptual behaviour model;
- **Milestone 2:** Findings from the qualitative interviews with government and representative body stakeholders;
- **Milestone 3:** Findings from depth interviews and case study research including refinement of the conceptual behaviour model;
- **Milestone 4:** Document outlining the proposed intervention models; and
- **Milestone 5:** Final report drawing together all research findings.



# 3 WHAT DO WE KNOW FROM EXISTING CHILD SUPPORT LITERATURE?

## A REVIEW OF EXISTING CHILD MAINTENANCE LITERATURE

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the report provides an overview of the findings from a desk-based review of existing child maintenance documents. The purpose of the desk research was to gather information from previous research to help understand the social, personal, demographic and financial factors related to child maintenance behaviour, specifically focusing on non-arrangement/non-payment behaviours. For the purpose of this chapter non-arrangement/non-payment of child maintenance will be referred to as negative child maintenance behaviour.

The analysis of existing secondary research suggests that the major contributing factors to no arrangement being in place (or non-payment) can be grouped into two broad categories: affordability and relationship factors.

The remainder of this chapter explores these factors in more detail and is structured as follows:

- Affordability factors; and
- Relationship factors.

### 3.2 Affordability

#### 3.2.1 *Income levels*

The findings from the desk research highlighted both the source and level of income to be underlying factors for whether an arrangement is put in place by separated parents.

Research suggests that there is a relationship between type of employment and payment; reporting that higher paid workers such as civil servants, armed forces and caring professionals are more likely to pay child maintenance than low paid workers such as drivers and factory workers (Atkinson, A. & McKay, S. 2005, [pgs 30, 40 & 41]).

Level of household income was also considered to be an important factor in promoting positive child maintenance behaviour. Various research studies indicated that those on lowest incomes were more likely to have no child maintenance arrangement in place. In particular, Wikeley *et al.* (2008 [pg 69]), report that private arrangements were twice as common among non-CSA PWCs with a household income of £10,000 or more compared with those in the lowest income brackets. Furthermore, this study directly associated the use of court or consent orders with level of household income, stating that only two per cent of non-CSA PWCs in the lowest income bracket had such an arrangement in place compared with one in five of those in the top income band. This suggests that those with higher incomes are more likely to use the courts and therefore have an arrangement in place, than those on lower incomes.

The desk research exercise confirmed that non-CSA NRPs are, to some extent, a hidden community with little profile data available. This is particularly true for those outside of the state system who have no arrangement in place. However, some information does exist; Bradshaw *et al.* (1999, [pgs 66-67]) found that 20 per cent of separated fathers have equivalent household net income below the poverty threshold. A subsequent survey of non-CSA NRP respondents was undertaken in 2008 through the Relationship Separation and Child Support Study (Wikeley *et al.* (2008) [pg 47]) which found that nine per cent had an income under £10,000 with a further 48 per cent reporting an income over £30,000. However, these figures should be considered with caution due to the fact that the NRP sample was small and contained mostly high-earning individuals with child maintenance arrangements in place and was not representative of the non-CSA NRP population in its entirety.

### **3.2.2 Employment**

Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 210]) indicate that non-CSA PWCs are more likely to be working full-time than CSA PWCs. This study also reports that payment of regular child maintenance would encourage some non-CSA PWCs to take up employment; half of the non-CSA PWCs with no arrangement stated that they would consider paid employment if they received regular child maintenance payments.

From an NRP perspective, being unemployed can be a reason why an NRP does not provide child maintenance. This was true for approximately one-third of NRPs surveyed in the Absent Fathers study (Bradshaw *et al.* (1999) [pg 140]).

Job security is another fundamental factor. Atkinson *et al.* (2005, [pgs 32 & 40]) suggest that the less certain an NRP is about the regularity of their income the less likely they are to pay child maintenance; findings reported that self-employed NRPs were less likely to pay maintenance due to low, irregular income.

### 3.2.3 Other factors

Other factors related to affordability are informal support; housing; and settlement arrangements.

The provision of informal support from the NRP was the main reason cited by separated parents for not having an arrangement in place. 57 per cent of non-CSA PWCs reported receiving either informal support only (25 per cent) or both child maintenance and informal support (32 per cent) from the NRP (Wikeley *et al.* 2008, [pg 210]). Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pgs 89 & 97]) also reported that 49 per cent of non-CSA NRPs stated that no child maintenance arrangement was in place because they helped the PWC informally.

Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pgs 88-90]) suggests that the most common types of informal support provided by non-CSA NRPs were:

- Buying clothes or shoes (68 per cent);
- Birthday or Christmas presents (68 per cent);
- Buying toys, games or books (42 per cent);
- Activities/outings/socialising (36 per cent);
- Pocket money (29 per cent); and
- Buying food (26 per cent).

Findings from the Absent Fathers study (Bradshaw *et al.* 1999, [pg 156]) identified three additional types of informal support being provided, namely:

- Mortgage payments (85 per cent);
- Holidays or outings (74 per cent); and
- Help with school fees/trips (74 per cent).

For some PWCs, ad hoc informal support was accepted because they were sympathetic towards the financial pressures endured by the NRPs, in spite of their own financial struggles. For other PWCs, they accepted less than ideal arrangements in order to maintain good relationships (Bell *et. Al.*, 2006, [pg 36]).

There is also evidence of a link between the regularity of NRP-child contact and level of informal support provided. (Bradshaw *et al.* 1999, [pg 157]) reported that the majority of fathers who had regular weekly to monthly contact with children gave more informal support compared to those who had no contact with their child/ren (79 per cent of NRPs who had no contact with their child/ren gave no informal support).

The Bullen (2007) report recognised that households with no maintenance arrangement in place were less likely to own their own home stating that 51 per cent of those with no maintenance arrangement were social housing tenants compared with 30 per cent of those with a maintenance arrangement in place.

Furthermore, Atkinson *et al.* (2005, [pg 5]) reported that NRPs face high living costs as a result of a break-up, with some taking on large mortgages to buy a house with sufficient space for their children to come for overnight visits. This in turn can affect the amount of disposable income remaining for the provision of child maintenance.

Bradshaw *et al.* (1999, [pg 139 & 147]) suggests that where a capital settlement was made

involving the family home, less maintenance was paid; ten per cent of NRPs reported a capital or cash settlement with the PWC as the main reason for never contributing towards child maintenance.

### **3.3 Relationships**

#### **3.3.1 Previous marital status**

The analysis of the secondary research suggests that previous marital status is directly associated with whether an arrangement is put in place. Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 69]) concluded that virtually all non-CSA PWCs who had been in a casual or short-term relationship had no maintenance arrangement in place (98 per cent), compared with 45 per cent of formerly married couples with no arrangements in place.

#### **3.3.2 Relationship quality**

The Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 68]) study provides evidence of a strong association between the current quality of the parents' relationship and the existence of a formal or private arrangement, with those on friendly terms more likely to have an effective arrangement in place. Survey findings show that 46 per cent of non-CSA PWCs on friendly terms with their ex-partner had a private arrangement, compared with just three per cent of those with no current contact with the other parent. Furthermore, this survey reported that NRPs recognised the importance of being on friendly terms with the other parent to help make a private arrangement work.

Bell *et al.* (2006, [pg 4]) suggests that some separated parents regularly encounter conflict with the other parent whilst negotiating financial arrangements. This conflict can result in irregular and fluctuating payments of child maintenance which, in some cases, perpetuates acrimony between parents.

Acrimonious relationships between separated parents can sometimes result in statutory actions being initiated through the CSA; the Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 189]) study reports that 34 per cent of non-CSA PWCs who were not on friendly terms were very likely to use the CSA, compared with 15 per cent of those on friendly terms.

#### **3.3.3 Paternity**

The analysis of existing secondary research suggests that confidence over paternity is a contingent factor related to willingness to pay. Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 203]) suggest that concerns over paternity affect a small percentage of non-CSA NRPs (three per cent).

#### **3.3.4 Reasons for break-up**

Bell *et al.* (2006, [pg 34]) recognised that parents who had formal maintenance arrangements in place, tended to have less hostile break-ups with child maintenance usually being dealt with alongside other financial issues including practical matters concerning parenting and NRP-child contact. Research suggests that for other separated parents their emotional response to the relationship breakdown negatively impacts on a parent's ability to put satisfactory child maintenance arrangements in place.

### **3.3.5 Contact with child/ren**

Level of NRP-child contact can affect an NRP's willingness to pay. Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg65]) found that nine out of ten non-CSA NRPs were of the opinion that an NRP who is paying full maintenance should be permitted regular contact with their child/ren. In the same study, some NRPs were of the opinion that if NRP-child contact is not allowed less child maintenance should be provided (six out of ten non-CSA NRPs were of this opinion).

Findings from the 2006 Families and Children Study reported that younger children were more likely to experience weekly or daily contact with their NRP than older children. Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 122]) suggests that almost 95 per cent of non-CSA NRPs had some level of contact with their children. Of these, 66 per cent had face-to-face contact at least once a week, 27 per cent had their child/ren for overnight visits for at least two nights a week while a further 36 per cent had their children to stay over for between one and two nights a week.<sup>18</sup>

For the vast majority of non-CSA NRPs (94 per cent) surveyed in the Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 65]) study, contact arrangements were not a cause of tension between parents; only two per cent reported that it was a major source of tension. This study went on to suggest that in most cases separated parents demonstrate flexibility when dealing with child contact – 78 per cent of non-CSA NRPs reported it being easy to change their contact arrangements with the other parent. Once again, it is important to note that this study sampled mainly high-earning individuals with arrangements in place.

Bradshaw *et al.* (1999, [pg 140]) suggests that obstructed or minimal contact time between the NRP and child can be a reason why some NRPs stop the payment of child maintenance. It is suggested that the following factors can affect a father having more contact with his child:

- Fathers who were older when they became fathers;
- Employed fathers;
- Fathers with younger children;
- Fathers who live close to the child;
- Fathers who pay maintenance; and
- Fathers who have an amicable relationship with their ex-partner.

### **3.3.6 Re-partnering arrangements**

Past and present relationship status can have an impact on the likelihood of maintenance arrangements being put in place. Bell *et al.* (2006, [pg 48]) reports that for some NRPs, discovering a PWC has a new partner was a cause of non-compliance, for a combination of pragmatic and emotional reasons. Bradshaw *et al.* (1999, [pg 40]) indicate that six per cent of NRPs who had paid maintenance in the past stopped paying due to the PWC remarrying/re-partnering. Other NRPs surveyed in the Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 122]) study were of the view that child maintenance should be reduced if their ex-partner had re-

---

<sup>18</sup> Note the sample size of NRPs in the Wikeley *et al.* study was small and not representative of the NRP population, drawing mostly on high income fathers with effective arrangements in place. Respondent numbers were as follows: Non-CSA NRPs: 189; Non-CSA PWCs: 656; CSA NRPs: 479; and CSA PWCs: 632.

partnered.

In certain circumstances, PWCs who have re-partnered view this relationship as a new start and prefer to have no ties with their previous relationship including the receipt of child maintenance from their ex-partner. The Relationship Separation and Child Support Study (2008, [pg 75]) of non-CSA PWCs, who had re-partnered, reported that 38 per cent stated they had no arrangement in place because they preferred not to receive maintenance.

Half of the non-CSA NRPs interviewed within the same survey had re-partnered. According to Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 122]) half of all NRPs surveyed felt that their contributions of child maintenance should be reduced if their ex-partner re-partnered.

### 5.3.3 Introduction of new children

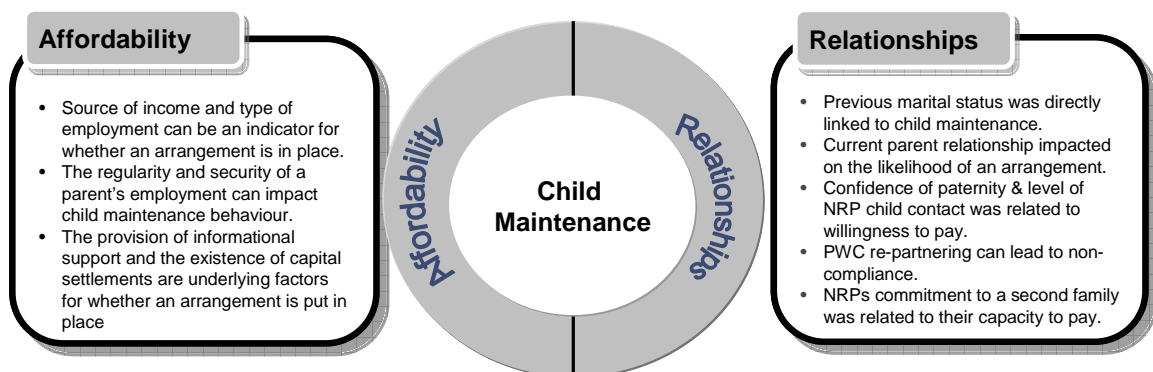
An NRP's commitment to a new second family is a contingent factor related to their capacity to pay. Some NRPs will put any children they live with (either birth or step-children) in a subsequent relationship before children from a previous relationship.

An extended family can influence the NRP's attitude towards the provision of child maintenance. Wikeley *et al.* (2008, [pg 122]) reports that one-fifth of non-CSA NRPs were of the opinion that an NRP with a new child should pay less child maintenance to their other children.

## 3.4 Summary

The analysis of existing secondary research suggests that the major contributing factors to no arrangement being in place (or non-payment) can be grouped into two broad categories: affordability; and relationship factors:

Figure 3.1: Factors that affect child maintenance



- Affordability of an arrangement is determined by the source and level of parent's income and is affected by their employment status. The provision of informal support and the existence of capital settlements are underlying factors for whether an arrangement is put in place by separated parents; and
- Past and present relationship status can have an impact on the likelihood of a child

maintenance arrangement being put in place. PWCs that had been in a casual or short-term relationship were more likely to have no arrangement in place compared with formerly married couples. The more friendly the parent's relationship and the less restrictions on NRP-child contact the more likely it is for an effective arrangement to be put in place.

# 4 WHAT DO EXISTING BEHAVIOURAL MODELS TELL US?

## A REVIEW OF EXISTING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE MODELS

### 4.1 Introduction

As part of the desk-based research approximately 60 behaviour models were reviewed. The desk research did not uncover any evidence or examples of specific behaviour models being applied in a child maintenance context. Furthermore, there did not appear to be a suitable model that could be used in a child maintenance context to initiate change. However, consideration of individual behaviour change models, indicated that the conceptual underpinning of certain models may be relevant to behaviour change regarding child maintenance. Therefore models were grouped by concept and the potential application of that concept to child maintenance behaviour explored at a hypothetical level.

This chapter is structured according to the concepts underpinning the groups of models considered to be pertinent to child maintenance as follows:

- Attitudes, beliefs and values;
- Emotions;
- Information;
- Economics;
- Attitude influencers; and
- Intentions.

The chapter concludes by introducing a conceptual behaviour model for child maintenance.

### 4.2 Attitudes, beliefs and values

Certain behaviour change theories highlight the role of attitudes, beliefs and values (attitudinal models) in influencing behaviours and illustrate how group behaviours can affect attitude formation. Eight particular theories were considered in the desk research and Table 4.1 outlines three of the key theories.



**Table 4.1: Attitudinal models reviewed in the desk research**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Rosenstock's Health Belief Model (1974)	Rosenstock's model comprises of six factors which explain why individuals act in certain ways. These six factors are perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cue to action and self-efficacy.
Rogers' Protection Motivation Theory (1977)	A deliberative model which construes behaviour as a decision making process and assumes that behaviour to involve planning ahead is based on outcome expectations.
Fishbein & Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (1975)	This model focuses on the individuals intention, their attitude and subjective norms (belief that what others think about the behaviour is important).

The models in this group hold to the belief that behaviour outcomes and the self evaluation of those outcomes determine an individual's attitude to the behaviour, i.e. a person will behave in a certain way if they believe it is the right thing to do and/or that others will commend their behaviour. In attitudinal models behaviour intention is seen as the most important determinant of behaviour and an individual's attitude towards performing a behaviour is one of the influences on behaviour intention. A belief about what other people think about the behaviour is also a key impact on behaviour intention.

**Table 4.2: Examples of the application of attitudinal models**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Example application</b>
<b>Community Participation:</b> Blood Donation / Voter Choice	Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), has been used to change habit/past behaviour by encouraging people to donate blood rather than previously abstaining and to encourage voter choice, to promote a more positive voting attitude.
<b>General Habitual Behaviour:</b> Tooth brushing	Rodgers Theory has been applied to the behaviour of tooth brushing, where the 'protection motivation' construct acts as the mediating variable between attitudes and the end behaviour.
<b>Health:</b> Food Choice	Rosenstock's model makes clear that the food choices of an individual are determined by their attitudes, beliefs and values. For example, an individual may believe that they can make the right food choices, but this needs to be followed by the availability of and exposure to resources that prompt action and change.

In order to explore the utility of attitudinal models as a method of explaining and changing behaviour regarding child maintenance, hypothetical examples of how attitudes might be at play in driving child maintenance behaviour were configured. These examples were based on the facts regarding the contextual and individual factors associated with child maintenance gleaned from the desk research. Sets of examples of the potential application of attitudinal models to child maintenance behaviour are illustrated in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: How attitude models can help us understand behaviour in a child maintenance context**

**PWC believes NRP has a financial obligation to their child and friends agree:** as a result of this the parent with care (PWC) takes action to find the non-resident parent (NRP) to discuss arrangements with the possible end result of an arrangement being put in place. This fits in with Fishbein and Ajzen’s Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) where the individual has a behaviour intention. This is then strengthened by their attitude and belief that what others think is important and hence they are motivated to take that step to find the NRP and put an arrangement in place.

**NRP knows that paying child maintenance is the right thing to do:** this will result in the NRP paying child maintenance even if it is a small amount (all that the NRP can afford). This can be explored in Stern et al.’s Schematic Causal Model of Environmental Concern where the NRPs values (wanting to provide for their child) are at the top of the hierarchy. Beliefs and attitudes come below this (knowing that he can’t afford to pay but believing that he can pay a small amount to help the PWC).

### 4.3 Emotions

Models reviewed in this section take into account emotion as a basis for decision-making. Three particular theories were considered in the desk research as outlined in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Emotion models reviewed in the desk research**

Theory	Explanation
Slovic’s Affect Heuristic (2002)	Slovic uses emotion as a basis for decision making and believes that attitudes are formed based on the emotional response to the behaviour.
Loewenstein et al.’s Risk as Feelings Model (2001)	This model identifies a direct path between emotion and behaviour instead of habit. It also shows emotion as influencing attitude formation at the start of the process.
Schwartz Norm Activation Theory (1977)	The factor driving norm activation is ‘a feeling of moral obligation’, which is explicitly unrelated to intentions.

These models take into consideration how emotions are affected by the formation of intentions i.e. emotions affect what people intend to do. People often base their personal assessments of risk not on probabilities, but quick emotional responses. Usually a person’s first response to the information stimulus is emotional, from which attitudes then result.

**Table 4.5: Examples of the application of emotion models**

Behaviour	Example application
<b>Health:</b> Healthy eating	Slovic’s model can be applied to the concept of healthy eating where an individual makes a decision based on their emotions to eat more healthily. The attitude of the individual is formed on their emotional response to healthy eating.
<b>Health:</b> Smoking	Within the Risk as Feelings Model applied to smoking, an individual’s behaviour is driven by their emotions and the feeling that they need a cigarette. When they try to give up they realise the benefits outweigh the drawbacks but often emotions overcome the good intentions.
<b>Health:</b> Drug use	Schwartz makes the link between an individual’s awareness of the

---

consequences of drug use. The model indicates that they are aware of the consequences of drug use and may feel a slight moral obligation to not take them although this is unrelated to their intentions.

---

The above models are particularly relevant to child maintenance as emotions can play a big part in the decisions surrounding child maintenance, especially if the break-up has been emotional for either or both parents. Table 4.6 illustrates how emotion theories can be related to parent behaviours, using hypothetical examples based on secondary research findings.

**Table 4.6: Application of emotion models to help understand child maintenance behaviour**

---

**PWC fears that child maintenance payment will result in contact with the NRP:** as a result of this the PWC does not take action to contact the NRP to discuss arrangements. The final end result is that the PWC does not receive maintenance and the child has no contact with the NRP. This behaviour is explored in Lowenstein et al.'s Risk as Feelings Model where emotions eventually overcome intentions and results in the individual 'bailing out'.

---

**NRP believes the PWC and her new partner are financially better off than he is and so he should not struggle to pay when he can't afford child maintenance:** which may result in the NRP not paying. This is in line with the Schwartz Norm Deactivation Theory where the NRP may deny that the child needs them in their life as they are unable to provide as much for them as the PWC and their new partner. The NRP then delegates the parenting role to the PWCs new partner, this is then followed by the NRP distancing him/herself from the new family and avoiding taking any further action.

---

## 4.4 Information

Information models are formed on the basis that information generates knowledge, which in turn influences the individual's behaviour, which finally results in their behaviour changing. It is widely noted, however, that information alone is not enough to change behaviour and as such the models highlight the need for people to feel involved and empowered to make a change. The role of information in decision-making and in shaping attitudes and behaviour is emphasised in the theories outlined in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7: Information models reviewed in the desk research**

Theory	Explanation
The Value Action Gap (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002)	Information plays a significant role in shaping attitudes but the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is often not as strong. Simply there is a difference in what people say and what they do.
Awareness Interest Decision Action (AIDA) (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002)	AIDA demonstrates that information generates knowledge, which shapes attitudes, which in turn leads to behaviour.

**Table 4.8: Examples of the application of information models**

Behaviour	Example application
<b>Health:</b> Nutritional information to help people make healthy eating choices / information on alcohol units	The Value Action Gap model has been used to understand individual's behaviour with regards to information. In health for example, consumers are provided with information to help them make healthy food choices/drink less alcohol. Individuals will read this information, say they will take it on board but often they don't follow through on their intentions.
<b>Environment:</b> Home Energy Use (better billing, smartmeters)	This model has been applied by providing information to home owners on how to save energy in their home and how the use of smartmeters could make their payments less cumbersome. The information generated knowledge about the options available, which changed attitudes, consequently leading to a change in behaviour.

Information is important in a child maintenance context so that parents are aware of their options and what they are entitled to/should be paying. The examples in Table 4.9 illustrate how information theories can be related to parent behaviours, although it is recognised that information alone is not likely to initiate behaviour change.

**Table 4.9: Application of information models to help understand child maintenance behaviour**

<b>PWC is aware of the overall benefits of obtaining payment but won't take action:</b> as a result no arrangements are put in place. This fits in with the Value Action Gap theory where individuals have acquired knowledge on the benefits of obtaining payments and they may say they will seek payment. However the end result may be that they say they will seek payment but don't ever take action.
<b>PWC heard bad reports about the CSA:</b> this will possibly result in the PWC not using the CSA. The Awareness Interest Decision Action (AIDA) could be used in this case to change behaviour. Positive information is acquired by the PWC about the CSA, which changes the PWC's attitude and leads to a positive change in behaviour, resulting in the PWC using the CSA.

## 4.5 Economics

The principles of behavioural economics models highlight the influence of decision-making on behaviours concerning finances. Four particular theories were considered in the desk research and three key theories are outlined in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10: Behavioural economic models reviewed in the desk research**

Theory	Explanation
Principles of Hyperbolic Discounting, Framing and Inertia (Talbot et al., 2007; Halpern et al., 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The hyperbolic discounting model assumes that people offset long-term benefits against short-term rewards;</li> <li>• The framing model is based on the theory that the decision made by an individual depends on how the available choices are presented to them; and</li> <li>• The inertia model is based on the theory that when the choice is too difficult, people may not change their behaviour at all, or may choose the easiest option.</li> </ul>

Simon's Bounded Rationality (1955)	When individuals are pursuing utility, their decision making processes are 'bounded' by personal abilities and situational factors which limits their capacity for deliberation.
Stanovich & West's System 1 / System 2 Cognition (2000)	System 1 is 'intuition', being fast, automatic and effortless, whilst system 2 is 'reasoning' being deliberative, effortful and slow. The two systems run simultaneously.

The standard neoclassical model of behaviour economics assumes that people carry out a full rational analysis of all their available options. For a variety of reasons this model does not apply to all population groups; people often just copy the actions of other people.

**Table 4.11: Examples of the application of behaviour economic models**

Behaviour	Example application
<b>Finance:</b> Citizen behaviour towards pensions.	The Inertia component of this model can be used to describe how individuals react to pensions. Often pensions are found to be complicated and the average consumer doesn't understand the technical jargon. It is in cases like this when consumers are faced with difficult decisions or too much choice that people may choose not to have a pension or choose the easiest option.
<b>Financial decisions:</b> Citizen behaviour towards investments.	When individuals are making financial decisions, for example, investments, it may be possible to use the system 1 / system 2 cognition. The individual will take time to 'reason' and weigh up the benefits whilst taking impressions from their 'intuition'. The reasoning 'system' will make explicit judgements based on the 'intuition'.

The desk research has established that affordability is associated with child maintenance payment/non-payment. It is unclear if this is a rational consideration of the benefits/non-benefits of contributing child maintenance or is linked to other factors. The examples in Table 4.12 illustrate how behaviour economic theories might be related to parent behaviours.

**Table 4.12: Behaviour economics models to help understand child maintenance behaviour**

**NRP plans to contact PWC as soon as he finds a job:** and as a result he is still not paying. This can be related to Stanovich and West's System 1/System 2 cognition theory. In this case the NRP uses his intuition and realises that he should be paying child maintenance. His reasoning (that he can't afford to pay just yet, but will when he gets a job) is impressed on by his intuition that he should pay, therefore coming to the decision that he will contact the PWC as soon as he finds a job.

**The PWC fails to offer a manageable number of choices to the NRP:** this could possibly result in the NRP not paying and no arrangement being put in place. This fits in with the 'principles of hyperbolic discounting, framing and inertia' model as the framing model demonstrates that the decision made by the NRP depends on the options given to him by the PWC.

## 4.6 Attitude influencers

Certain behaviour models highlight the role of attitude influencers (others in a person's immediate and wider social circle) in influencing behaviours and illustrate how they can affect the individual's decisions. Three particular themes were considered in the desk

research as outlined in Table 4.13. These models take into consideration how individuals are influenced by others around them to make decisions.

**Table 4.13: Some attitude influencer models reviewed in the desk research**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Schwartz Norm Activation Theory (1977)	Norm activation has two stages, firstly an individual feels the awareness of the consequences of their own actions for others and then the personal costs of acting are calculated with the result that responsibility may be denied.
Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1986)	Behaviour intention is the key determinant of behaviour according to this theory. There are 3 components which shape this theory: a person's attitude toward performing the behaviour, the perceived social pressure to adopt the behaviour (subjective norm) and perceived behaviour control.
Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (1962 onwards)	This theory explains the adoption of innovations by society. There are many elements to this theory but perhaps the most relevant to this research is the 'Innovation-Decision Process' through which individuals decide whether to adopt. This comprises of five steps, knowledge of the idea, persuasion, decision, information and confirmation.

Outcomes are influenced by an individual's positive or negative feelings about performing a behaviour and incorporates how the role of others can effect these feelings and of how, why, and at what rate new ideas spread through cultures. Other people's behaviour matters and people often do things by observing others and copying; people are encouraged to continue to do things when they feel other people approve of their behaviour.

**Table 4.14: Examples of the application of attitude influencer models**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Example application</b>
<b>Health:</b> Eating vegetables, food choice, dental flossing	Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory can be used to introduce new or innovative ideas as well as encourage people to change their current behaviour. For example eating vegetables has been promoted and people are encouraged to increase their intake. The person is then persuaded to try this out for themselves, they then make the decision based on all the information they have received and either follow through or ignore the advice completely.
<b>Transport:</b> Seatbelt use	Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour model has been applied to the campaigns for seatbelt use where the behaviour intention is to wear the seatbelt; this is built on by social pressure and campaigns. The individual's attitude has the final say as to whether or not they feel they have control over the outcome of the decision i.e. to wear the seatbelt.
<b>Addictive:</b> Altruistic/helping	The Schwartz Norm Activation Theory has been applied to show how a person decides to help another individual out. The person will have an awareness of the consequences of their own action for others. This is then followed up by calculating the personal costs of acting. This may then result in the person failing to help out.

Attitude influencers can have a major impact on why parents do / do not put arrangements in place. The examples in Table 4.15 illustrate how attitude influencer theories can be related to parent behaviours.

**Table 4.15: Attitude influencer models to help understand child maintenance behaviour**

**PWC heard bad reports on the CSA and won't use:** as a result the PWC does not seek support from the CSA. This fits in with Roger's Diffusion of Innovations theory where the PWC has heard bad reports about the CSA which has persuaded her to make the decision and not use the service.

**NRP has friends and work colleagues who have separated from their partners and don't pay:** this can be aligned with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour where the NRP is under pressure from his/her peers to not pay as they are in the same situation and they don't pay. The NRP has control over the situation and as a result may make the decision not to pay.

## 4.7 Intentions

Certain behaviour models highlight the role of intentions in influencing behaviours and illustrate how they can affect the individual's decisions. Two particular theories were considered in the desk research as outlined in Table 4.16.

**Table 4.16: Intentions models reviewed in the desk research**

Theory	Explanation
Vlek et al.s Needs Opportunities Abilities Model (1998)	This is an intention based model of behaviour, with intentions formed from motivation (combination of needs and opportunities) and agency (based on opportunities and abilities). The end result is not behaviour but the dual outcomes of personal well-being, and environmental quality.
Gollwitzer's Implementation Intentions (1993)	This theory is based on the individual rehearsing scenarios for example 'if I am faced with situation X, then I will take action Y'. This makes a response/decision much easier for the individual if the situation ever arises. The individual will then respond based on intentions and not habits.

These models are intention based models where intentions are formed by an individual's motivation and agency. They take into consideration the societal factors such as demography, culture and institutions which contribute towards behaviour.

**Table 4.17: Examples of the application of intentions models**

Behaviour	Example application
<b>Environment:</b> Household consumption, environmental impacts.	Gollwitzer's model can be applied to environmental issues where an individual can prepare for a scenario and be ready to take appropriate action when the time comes. For example regarding the use of low energy light-bulbs, an individual must make the choice to become energy efficient and purchase the energy efficient light bulb.
<b>Health:</b> People meeting their health goals e.g. exercising more, eating less, taking pills regularly.	Vlek et al's model can be used to explain how people meet their health goals. Their intentions are formed from motivation i.e. need to lose weight and agency where the individual has opportunities to do so, such as joining a gym. The end result being that their personal well-being improves.

Intentions can be both positive and negative in relation to child maintenance behaviour. The examples in Table 4.18 illustrate how intention theories can be related to parent behaviours.

**Table 4.18: Intention models to help understand behaviour in a child maintenance context**

**PWC knows the NRP can't afford regular child maintenance payments but she is struggling financially and is intending to take some action but hasn't up until now:** This scenario can be applied to Vlek et al's Opportunities Abilities Model (1998) where the PWC is now motivated to do something and will take action based on the opportunities (e.g. CSA, contacting the NRP) available to him/her. This will hopefully result in the NRP providing support for the PWC and the child/ren improving the personal well-being of both the PWC and the child/ren.

**NRP is intending to contact PWC and pay (once he gets a job) but hasn't up until now but will start.** In this situation we can use Gollwitzer's Implementation Intentions theory. The NRP is telling him / herself that once they get a job they will contact the PWC and arrange child maintenance. If the NRP keeps 'rehearsing', then when they get a job they will take the action they have intended to take all along rather than going by habit and not taking any action.

## 4.8 Towards a conceptual model for child maintenance behaviour

The desk research on factors associated with child maintenance and behaviour change was used to build a conceptual bespoke behaviour model for testing in parent interviews for child maintenance.

To recap:

- **Affordability** includes source and level of income, employment status, employment security, support-in-kind, housing and settlement arrangements as factors associated with child maintenance; and
- **Relationships** includes previous marital status, current relationship status, paternity, reasons for break-up, contact with child/ren, re-partnering, and introduction of new



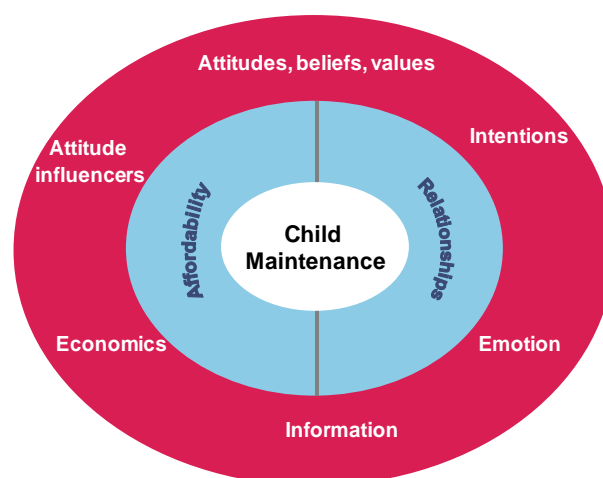
children as factors influencing payment/non-payment of child maintenance.

An exploration of behaviour models indicated that six concepts underpinning various models may help explain the behaviour associated with affordability, relationships and their interaction with payment/non-payment of child maintenance. The six concepts are:

- **Attitudes, beliefs and values:** What are the attitudes of PWCs/NRPs towards child maintenance? What effect do parents' beliefs and attitudes have on child maintenance arrangements?
- **Intentions:** Does the PWC/NRP intend/not intend to put an arrangement in place? What are the barriers/facilitating factors relating to child maintenance intentions?
- **Emotion:** Do emotions play a part in whether arrangements are/are not put in place? Does the emotional journey have any impact on the timing of arrangement?
- **Information:** Do parents have enough information about child maintenance? Is there a need for further information on particular issues?
- **Economics:** Do parents consider the child maintenance options likely to bring most benefit to them/their children?
- **Attitude influencers:** Do friends or family influence NRP/PWC decisions on child maintenance and to what extent? Do support organisations have any influence on parents setting up maintenance arrangements?

Figure 4.1 illustrates how these concepts are wrapped around affordability and relationship issues to indicate the interplay between the concepts, affordability and relationship issues and the ultimate effect on child maintenance.

**Figure 4.1: Potential drivers of PWC and NRP child maintenance behaviour**



## 4.9 Summary

Analysis of the behavioural change models suggests that there is not a ready-made behaviour model that fits the child maintenance context to initiate change. Several concepts underpinning change models may be applicable in a child maintenance context as follows:

- Attitudinal models which hold to the belief that behaviour outcomes and the evaluation of those outcomes determine an individual's attitude to the behaviour.
- Emotion models take into consideration the emotional factor of affect which is incorporated as part of the process of intention formation.
- Information models which focus on rational choice as the basis of the role of information in understanding behaviour outcomes.
- Behaviour economic models which highlight the influence of decision making on behaviours concerning finance.
- Attitude influencer models which highlight how the role of others can affect an individual's feelings about performing certain behaviours.
- Intention models which illustrate the role of intentions in influencing behaviours and how they can affect the individual's decision.

These concepts were incorporated into a conceptual behaviour model, adding to established affordability and relationship issues as factors that help understand child maintenance behaviour. The conceptual model hypothesises that child maintenance behaviour is affected by affordability issues, relationship issues, underpinned by attitudes, beliefs, values; intentions; emotions; information; economics; and attitude influencers. The context, with specific reference to stage of relationship breakdown and how change ready a parent is, may also be contributory factors.

The hypotheses incorporated within the model were tested in the primary research with separated parents to understand their role, if any, in influencing child maintenance behaviours.

# 5 WHAT ARE THE KEY DRIVERS OF CHILD MAINTENANCE BEHAVIOUR?

## PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the primary research findings. The qualitative research undertaken within this project served to provide genuine insights and real life examples of the views and experiences of 67 separated parents. It is important to note that these findings provide insights across the separated parent population, they are not representative of the eligible population as a whole but a typology of the most common ones found in this sample.

It presents the child maintenance behaviours that are common among separated parents and considers the drivers of those behaviours, including testing those drawn out from the desk research. The chapter concludes by examining the role of attitude influencers and information provision on child maintenance behaviour.

The remainder of this chapter is presented under the following headings:

- What behaviours are we trying to explain?;
- Relationships as a driver – research evidence;
- Emotions as a driver – research evidence;
- Attitudes as a driver – research evidence;
- Affordability as a driver – research evidence;
- Intentions as a driver – research evidence; and
- Towards a prioritisation of the key drivers.

## 5.2 What behaviours are we trying to explain?

The analysis from the primary research with separated parents suggests that there are broadly six child maintenance behaviours common among those interviewed (reference is made to stakeholder findings where views are aligned with those of the separated parents). These have been conceptualised<sup>19</sup> as follows:

- **Providing** child maintenance, where the non resident parent (NRP) is keen to contribute child maintenance;
- **Receiving** child maintenance contributed by the NRP, where the parent with care (PWC) is happy with arrangements;
- **Challenging** child maintenance arrangements, where parents are not happy with the existing arrangements and challenge the other parent to change their arrangement going forward;
- **Accepting** child maintenance contributed by the NRP, where PWCs are unhappy with arrangements and accept the status quo due to a desire not to upset/worsen co-parent relationships;
- **Controlling** child maintenance, where the NRPs do not trust the PWC to allocate child maintenance to the child/ren or are the primary decision maker in nature of the support arrangements<sup>20</sup>; and
- **Abdicating** child maintenance responsibility, where parents believe it is someone else's responsibility to provide child maintenance. For example, where the PWC earns more than the NRP and the NRP transfers their responsibility to provide child maintenance to the PWC. Alternatively, where the PWC believes that they do not have a role in encouraging the NRP to contribute and transfers or abdicates their responsibility to pursue child maintenance.

Providing and receiving behaviours are positive behaviours where the arrangement is working effectively between the parents. The remaining four types of child maintenance behaviours, namely: accepting, challenging, controlling and abdicating, are categorised in this analysis as negative behaviours where an ineffective arrangement exists between parents.

---

<sup>19</sup> The conceptualisation involved researchers applying description categories externally through analysis – interviewees did not use these words to describe themselves or their behaviour.

<sup>20</sup> Controlling behaviour was also noted among PWCs with regard to NRP child contact and, as noted in this chapter, can be a contentious issue which negatively affects relationships as a driver. It is not attributed to PWCs in this synopsis of behaviours noted as the specific focus is behaviours in respect to child maintenance.

These six child maintenance behaviours are exhibited by both NRPs and PWCs<sup>21</sup>. These behaviours were commonly identified amongst the 67 parents consulted within the primary research and are illustrated in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Child maintenance behaviours exhibited among separated parents in this study**

Child Maintenance Behaviour	NRP / PWC	Definition
Providing	NRP provider	Where NRPs are keen to contribute child maintenance.
Receiving	PWC receiver	PWCs receive child maintenance payments and are happy with their arrangements.
Accepting	PWC acceptor	PWCs accepting the child maintenance situation (whether positive or negative) due to a desire not to upset/worsen co-parent relationships.
Challenging	PWC challenger	Where parents are not happy with the existing arrangements and challenge the other parent to change their arrangement going forward.
	NRP challenger	
Controlling	NRP controller	Tendency for NRPs to control child maintenance, where NRPs do not trust the PWC to allocate child maintenance to the child/ren or are the primary decision maker in nature of child maintenance arrangements.
Abdicating	PWC abdicator	Where parents believe it is someone else's responsibility to provide child maintenance. For example, where the parent with care (PWC) earns more than the non resident parent (NRP) and the NRP abdicates their responsibility to provide child maintenance to the PWC. Alternatively, where the PWC believes that they do not have a role in encouraging the NRP to contribute and abdicates their
	NRP abdicator	

It is important to note that the behaviours described, and their expression across PWCs and NRPs, are a description of the behaviour being exhibited by the parent towards the maintenance arrangement, and at the point in time of the research. It must be recognised also that the behaviour of one parent does not happen in isolation and is likely to be a function of interactions with the other co-parent (both in the past and present), where a co-parent is in contact. Behaviours exhibited at the time of the research are not necessarily fixed and are subject to change. As the drivers of behaviour may change, then the behaviours exhibited may also change. Analysis of some interviewee experiences indicate that over the course of the separated co-parenting experience, several child maintenance behaviours had been exhibited up to that point in time. For example, a few NRPs had been abdicating child maintenance responsibilities until the introduction of new partners, who had influenced the NRP to put an arrangement in place.

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that these are not an exhaustive list of behaviours across the separated parent population but a typology of the most common ones found in this sample.

The child maintenance behaviours described above are influenced by a number of factors which are described in subsequent sections of this chapter.

### 5.3 Relationships as a driver – research evidence

Insights from the study suggest there are three different types of relationships that impact on child maintenance behaviour at anyone time. These are:

- The PWC - NRP relationship;
- The NRP- child relationship; and
- The introduction of new partners.

#### 5.3.1 The PWC-NRP relationship

The past stability and present amicability of the PWC-NRP relationship is an important predictor of the success of the arrangement. The research findings show that this is a consistent characteristic across separated parents who had some form of support in place and exhibited positive child maintenance behaviours i.e. providing and receiving.

*'We have an amicable relationship and we get on and because I was contracting and earning different amounts of money each month, I just said to her, 'right i'll give you a certain percentage and we'll stick to that.'*

(NRP, Group 3, 36+, Cardiff)

Interviews with stakeholders reaffirm the finding that the relationship between the parents has a significant affect on the child maintenance arrangements parents agree upon.

*'It is common for the couple to come together prior to separation to help communicate in a better way about the separation to their children and how they can manage their joint parenting. We tell them that although they stop being partners they don't stop being parents.'*

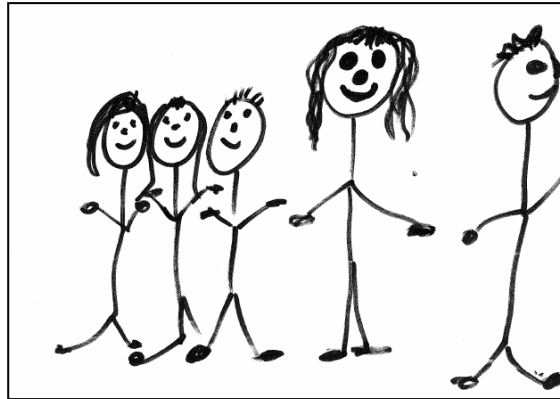
(National Stakeholder)

Those parents with no arrangement in place and were exhibiting negative behaviours reported having limited or no contact with the other parent. Where contact did exist, relationships were considered to be strained or fraught.

*'He wouldn't want contact for the sake of having contact; he would do it to pxxx me off. And that's the wrong thing to do anyway.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, Newcastle)

One parent illustrated this in the following drawing, which shows how the PWC and children are happy to have the NRP leave.



PWC, Group 2, 18-35, London – Glad to have NRP out of their life

The ability of parents to talk amicably, putting aside their differences for the needs of their children is important and was evident in the research amongst most parents who had some form of support arrangement in place. For some parents they had not forgiven the other parent for their part in the separation but despite some difficult co-parent relationships they had put aside their feelings of anger and hurt to focus on supporting the child/ren.

*'Got to be adult about these things when you've got another life involved that didn't ask for this situation.'*

(NRP, Group 3, 36+, London)

*'You just need a sensible head on you, there is no need to get aggressive or be nasty to each other.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Glasgow)

A wide range of reasons were reported for relationship breakdown, including:

- Affair;
- Drink/drug addiction;
- Domestic violence;
- Drifted apart; and
- Constant arguing.

Reasons reported for relationship breakdown were similar whether an arrangement was in place or not. The research findings suggest that the reasons for separation in themselves are not a key driver of arrangement effectiveness, whereas the emotional response, by the parents, to the separation plays a bigger role in child maintenance behaviour – this is considered in more detail within the 'Emotions' subsection 5.4.

### **5.3.2 The NRP-child relationship**

Strong emotional bonds with children were particularly present among NRPs who were previously married or co-habiting with the other parent compared with those who had never lived together. These individuals consistently reported feelings of guilt and concern

regarding their children's welfare both during and post separation; in particular NRP providers noted that their greatest concern was the welfare of their children and the effect of the separation on their children. The findings from the parent depth interviews suggest that NRPs who have strong bonds with their child/ren were more likely to have child maintenance arrangements in place, thus exhibiting providing behaviour.

*'If they need things I'm still the provider for them, at least the partial provider and if I wasn't paying towards that I would feel like I had less of a right to their life.'*  
(NRP, Group 3, 18-25, Cardiff)

*'My children were the biggest worry, whether or not they had adjusted to the fact that their father wasn't living at home anymore.'*  
(NRP, Group 3, 36+, Cardiff)

*'My kids were the first thing on my mind. The minute I left they became my priority, the last thing that I wanted was my kids thinking that they won't see their dad again. I said to her my main concern is sorting out the kids and whatever needed to be done between me and my wife would be done later. I just wanted to get it over and done with and emotions would be in the way, we didn't put it in writing until a few months after.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 36+, Cardiff)

NRP and child contact can be a contentious issue amongst some parents and may be a potential sticking point around child maintenance arrangement discussions. Agreement between parents on child contact can positively impact on arrangements and was evident amongst those parents who exhibited the positive behaviours of providing and receiving child maintenance. This resonates with the views expressed during the representative body interviews suggesting that the disruption of NRP-child contact time accompanies most separations and how that is addressed impacts on child maintenance.

*'It's like if you contribute to the relationship I would provide some support but it's like I'm not even there. I'm not even in or surrounding [child], so that's why I don't support right now.'*  
(NRP, Group 1, 18-35, Glasgow)

For some PWCs the NRP-child contact was more important to them than the provision of child maintenance contributions by the NRP. Even when PWCs were not happy with the amount of child maintenance provided, they decided not to pursue a greater child maintenance amount as they were concerned that this may cause friction with the NRP and ultimately negatively impact on the NRP- child contact time.

*'He could contribute a bit more if he wanted but it doesn't really bother me as long as he's got a better relationship with [child].'*  
(PWC, Group 2, 18-35, Cardiff)

*'I don't really care about anything as long as he has quality time with [child].'*  
(PWC, Group 2, 36+, London)

There is evidence from the findings to suggest that some children become more empowered in the child maintenance process as they get older and go straight to the NRP



and ask for support directly. The research engaged with some parents who recognised that their child/ren influenced and in some cases sought child maintenance directly from the NRP. There was also evidence of PWCs prompting their child/ren to ask the other parent directly for support instead of these requests being led by the PWC.

*'He would just give [child] some money himself and pay for stuff if she needs something, if she [child] needs a new pair of jeans, he would go and get them.'*  
(PWC, Group 2, 36+, Belfast)

This type of arrangement worked particularly well where parental relationships were more difficult and NRP-child relationships had been limited in younger years.

*'We've never really come to any financial arrangement, if [child] needs clothes, I'll take her out and get her some clothes, if she's here with me I'll feed her.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Glasgow)

### **5.3.3 The introduction of new partners**

Insights from the study suggest that the introduction of new partners can positively or negatively influence arrangements. Some parents recognised a positive influence, with the other parent's new partner ensuring arrangements were made/maintained.

*'She did say, you are going to have to sit down and sort this out and she turned around and said you're going to have to sit and shut your mouth and listen and she's going to have to do the same, you know it has to be done to work it out.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 36+, Coleraine)

New partners also provided a calming affect for some parents, helping them to keep their composure when dealing with the other parent.

*'She said [new partner] 'well you'll have to see sense and sit down and talk about this'. I said 'I know'. So I phoned her [PWC] back and I said look, for [child's] sake, we need to sort this out.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 36+, Coleraine)

Whereas for other parents they recounted experiences of a new partner diverting both time and funds from their children.

*'Couple of years ago I said if you gave me a set amount of money and he said oh well I'm getting married and we haven't got any money and I'm working and I'm not getting paid and I was like... go away.'*  
(PWC, Group 2, 36+, London)

Evidence from stakeholders found that new partners can put pressure on NRPs about child maintenance which can impact on their ability to start a family.

*'New partners are often cross about their partner paying for the family he has left which impacts on them as a new couple and can also impact on their ability to afford to have a family together.'*  
(National Stakeholder)

Table 5.2 summarises the key factors relating to relationships that drive child maintenance behaviour in this study.

**Table 5.2: Key relationship factors affecting child maintenance behaviour in this study**

---

<b>Relationship factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Amicability of PWC-NRP relationship is key to the success of the arrangements...</li><li>• Parents who prioritise the needs of the children have more effective arrangements...</li><li>• Agreement between parents on child contact positively impact arrangements...</li><li>• The impact/emotional response to a separation plays a role in arrangement effectiveness...</li><li>• Strong bonds with children positively affect support arrangements...</li><li>• Older children can become arrangement brokers...</li><li>• New partners can positively or negatively influence arrangements...</li></ul>

---

## **5.4 Emotions as a driver – research evidence**

Emotions are running high for parents when a relationship ends. As illustrated in Figure 5.1, the findings identified a wide range of feelings present amongst parents at the time of break-up. In particular, feelings of sadness, anger, resentment and frustration were reported by most parents who participated in the primary research.

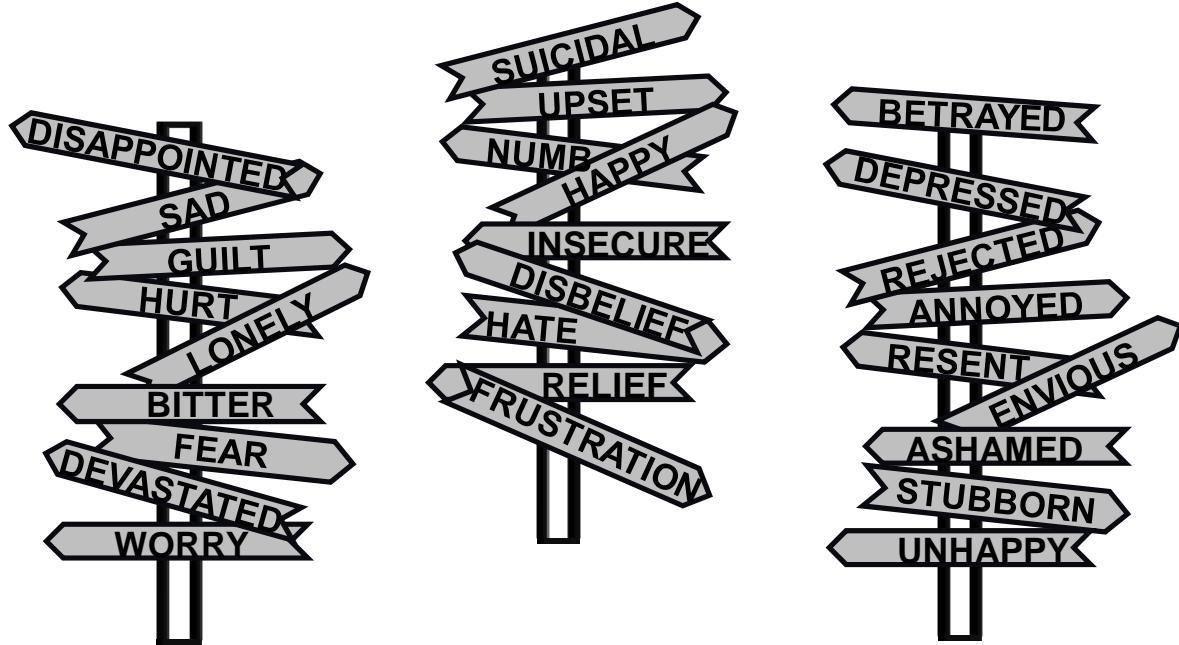
*‘I mean I’ve been on an absolute roller coaster ride where one day you’re prepared to be perfectly reasonable and the next day your behaviour’s totally erratic but I think it’s the emotions of the situation.’*

(PWC, Group 2, 36+ Glasgow)

*‘I was obviously devastated that we split up.’*

(PWC, Group 2, 18-35, Glasgow)

Figure 5.1: Expressed feelings experienced by parents at time of break-up

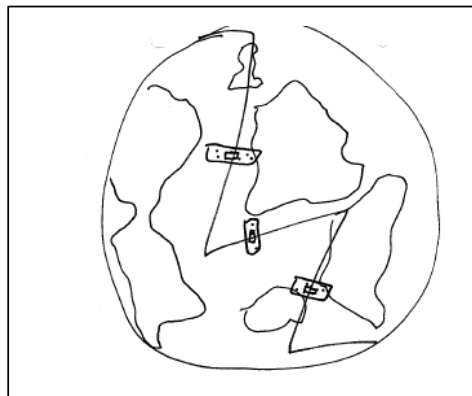


The research findings indicate that the emotional response of parents to the break-up can create difficult circumstances for discussing child maintenance.

*'I was devastated. I thought my world was going to fall apart.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Newcastle)

*'Once you start talking it isn't as bad but the initial talking is awful. I guess it feels like you're letting them back into your life.'*  
(PWC, Group 3, 36+, Newcastle)

One parent illustrated the devastating emotions associated with the relationship breakdown by drawing a broken world which was barely holding together.



PWC, Group 3, 36+, London

Parents with no support arrangements in place and who exhibited negative child maintenance behaviours were more likely to report feeling angry at the time of the break-up and ultimately less willing to meet the other parent to discuss arrangements.

*'I was angry and upset...I wasn't thinking about [child] at the time, I was thinking more about how I was feeling and what he'd done to me.'*  
(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, Glasgow)

Those who had some or regular support in place, were more likely to report emotions such as sadness and devastation, which did create difficult circumstances for discussing child maintenance but not so severe that they choose to abdicate their responsibility to address child maintenance.

A separation is a worrying time for PWCs, not only are they the sole carer for their child/ren they generally have financial concerns also. This coupled with the vast array of emotions at play can cause emotional exhaustion for some PWCs.

#### **5.4.1 Emotional Exhaustion**

It was evident from the primary research that emotional exhaustion can lead some parents to exhibit an accepting behaviour. This negative behaviour is present when a PWC accepts what is offered by the NRP even though they are not happy with the arrangement. Through exploring the rationale for this behaviour it became evident that the constant arguing, promises never coming to fruition, frustration and indeed worry over the impact on the child were the main reasons for a PWC to feel emotionally exhausted and to ultimately accept an ineffective arrangement.

*'What was very stressful and very upsetting was that he told the kids he wasn't going to go and then he just went the next day having said that...I mean I am still livid now because he still is treating the kids really badly.'*  
(PWC, Group 1, 36+, London)

#### **5.4.2 Practical versus emotional personalities**

Parent's emotional response can vary depending on their personality. For some PWCs they solely focused on the practicalities of the break-up, such as *'What do I need to run this home as a separate unit?'* Some PWCs also mentioned going back into employment after the separation to ensure that they could adequately provide for their children. Other PWCs were too distraught and could not cope with putting arrangements in place at the point of separation. These individuals required time to deal with their emotions and for some parents this took upwards of 3 to 4 months.

*'I think it's best to try and talk about it as soon as you can, but not get as emotionally involved, try and keep it on a professional basis as opposed to an emotional basis. I think it's a very fine line, try and not cross the emotional line, try and keep it on the practical line, this needs to be done, that needs to be done.'*  
(NRP, Group 3, 36+, Newcastle)

*'Very angry, very very angry because I thought well these children are our children, and we should be doing this jointly, just because our relationship hasn't worked out, and in the end I said oh well just carry on, as long as the children had me there that*

*was all I could do, it was beyond my control how he was acting. It was hard I've got to be honest, the arguing continued but this time we were fighting over the children because I was trying to make him stand up to his responsibilities but it was like knocking my head against a brick wall for about 12 months to be honest but things did settle.'*

(PWC, Group 3, 36+, Cardiff)

*'I just got on with it, I probably wasn't in the right frame of mind, but I addressed the situation and just got on and did what I needed to do.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, London)

### **5.4.3 Hostility and Loss**

At the time of separation some NRPs experienced feelings of hostility towards the PWC and this adversely affected arrangements. This hostility between parents was a result of the NRP demonising the PWC and blaming them for their separation. Some NRPs experienced a sense of loss, where they felt that their relationship and contact with their child/ren has suffered due to the separation.

*'I was concerned that I might drift away from my children and not be as close [to them].'*

(NRP, Group 1, 36+, London)

Other NRPs believed that the PWC held the 'upper hand' with regard to control over the NRP-child relationship. For instance a PWC uses the withdrawal of access as a punishment to the NRP who does not provide child maintenance.

*'The idea of the thing was really to see his daughter he would have to pay, and he didn't. You don't see, you don't pay. He didn't come to see and I never received the payment.'*

(PWC, Group 2, 18-35, Newcastle)

In many instances, feelings of hostility and loss can lead NRPs to exhibit controlling behaviours as they view their financial contributions to be the only part of parenting that is in their control.

### **5.4.4 Fear**

Intention to seek child maintenance is often thwarted by fear of consequence. The research engaged with some PWCs who were concerned about initiating child maintenance discussions with the NRP and how the NRP would react. These parents wanted a more structured arrangement in place but parents were concerned about negatively affecting the status quo and the possibility of the NRP stopping all support. For some PWCs, they had adopted an accepting behaviour to ensure that the NRP-child relationship was maintained. These PWCs did not feel confident or empowered to hold such difficult discussions with the NRP.

*'I'm worried about what I'm going to find...I'm worried that...what I'm absolutely terrified of is that I put something in place and then he [NRP] will get the hump and say well you don't need my money now and he'll take that away.'*

(PWC, Group 3, 36+, London)

*'I think if I'd done anything legally, or if I'd gone through the CSA, I feel it would've put a strain on the relationship.'*

(PWC, Group 3, 36+, Cardiff)

For other PWCs their fear was the action of initiating contact with the NRP. This was evident amongst some PWC abdicators who attributed their break-up to domestic violence or NRP anti-social behaviour, such as drugs/alcohol abuse. These parents were fearful that seeking child maintenance would involve initiating contact with the NRP again and they were not comfortable with this.

*'If I start getting money he's going to start seeing [child] again, he might not but he might and then we'll have to come to an arrangement to meet each other and I'm just not ready for that yet, but I'll get there.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, Glasgow)

#### **5.4.5 Pride**

Pride is a further barrier to the set-up of a child maintenance arrangement. The research suggests that for some PWCs, who have been separated from the NRP in excess of 5 years, they have had to support their child on their own and are proud that they have managed to raise them without the help of the NRP. Consequently, these parents are disinclined to pursue child maintenance and they want to continue to support their child without help from the NRP.

*'I'm proud that I haven't had to rely on other people I think it's good that we've done all the things we've done and that's down to me and I think that's good.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, London)

*'I feel good that I've done it myself and I haven't got him to thank for anything.'*

(PWC, Group 2, 18-35, Cardiff)

Other PWCs experienced being abandoned by their ex-partner who in some cases was directly involved with another partner. These PWCs had no contact with the NRP and were too proud to make the first move regarding child maintenance because the NRP had walked out on them.

*'Well I think he should've helped. He had run off with my best friend so I didn't really want to go off looking for him for financial help and he didn't offer any.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, Cardiff)

Table 5.3 summarises the key factors within emotions that drives child maintenance behaviour in this study.

**Table 5.3: Key emotional factors that drives child maintenance behaviour in this study**

---

**Key factors within the behaviour that drives child maintenance behaviour**

---

- Emotional response to break-up creates difficult circumstances for discussing child maintenance...
  - Parent's emotional response can vary depending on their personality and this impacts on timing of child maintenance set-up...
-

---

**Key factors within the behaviour that drives child maintenance behaviour**

---

- Emotional exhaustion/overload can influence action and outcomes...
  - Pride can prevent child maintenance discussions...
- 

## 5.5 Attitudes as a driver – research evidence

The research suggested there was universal support for the principle of paying child maintenance with all parents recognising the importance and responsibility of NRP contributions.

*'It takes two, he's made a child, he's obligated to pay for the child, just as if he had the child I would be obligated to pay, I would never not pay.'*  
(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, Glasgow)

*'It's your responsibility because we bring them into the world. I don't expect other people to look after my children. I look after them financially.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 36+, Cardiff)

*'He has the responsibility of his children, they didn't ask to be born. We brought them into this and then we created this mess, none of this is their fault.'*  
(PWC, Group 3, 36+, London)

However, some separated parents were adamant that payment/receipt of child maintenance was not appropriate for their circumstances. For instance, NRPs who provide irregular support stated the following reasons for not paying regular child maintenance:

- Already provided assistance with childcare;
- Provides ad hoc essentials on request by PWC such as nappies, wipes and clothes;
- Did not trust how the PWC would spend the child maintenance money;
- Cannot afford payment of regular child maintenance; and
- Desires recognition from child/ren.

*'We agreed that, basically, that when [child] was with his mum she would pay for everything at that side of it, when he was with me I would pay.'*  
(NRP, Group 3, 36+, Newcastle)

*'I usually would just say to [child] to get your dad to get you trainers you know...but certainly if he was going back to school I would say to [NRP] you get him like a school bag or whatever it was.. It was just really as and when he had money to get him something.'*  
(PWC, Group 2, 36+, Glasgow)

*'I know where the money is going. Whether its getting spent on [child], if I buy clothes, pay for her tennis classes, take her swimming, horse riding, I can see where the money is going. If I turned round every month and gave her [PWC] £300, she'd maybe go out and buy herself a pair of shoes or a skirt. She'd maybe still buy [child] a new coat and new shoes or something but if there's a spare £50 then she would spend it on herself maybe.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Glasgow)

*'I couldn't trust her at that point, with money, because I know she was probably drinking all the time.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 36+, Coleraine)

*'I would say would you like to go shopping and say, you go and choose what you want and I would pay for it. The joy on their faces from my point of view was great to see.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 36+ Cardiff)

Abdicating PWCs also viewed their circumstances to be exempt from this principle reporting reasons for their separation or length of time separated as contributing factors to no arrangement being in place. Yet again, these PWCs were proud of the fact that they were self-reliant and therefore had no aspirations for this to change. Consequently, abdicating PWCs did not believe that they had a role to encourage NRPs to contribute child maintenance.

*'I probably had a bit of pride by that time probably thinking I can cope on my own I don't need your money.'*

(PWC, Group 2, 36+, Glasgow)

*'It shouldn't really be my decision to try and get him more involved in the financial arrangement because he's an adult, he should know that he has a child that needs to be looked after but it doesn't always work like that.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, London)

### **5.5.1 Fear of NRP access**

Some PWCs had not put an arrangement in place because they associated this with access rights for the NRP. They felt that if the NRP was contributing towards the welfare of the child then they would want to have access and they were not always comfortable with this.

*'I assumed if I accepted maintenance he got access...it would have made me feel as if he had a hold on me and I just didn't want any part of him in my life.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, Belfast)

The research indicates that the passage of time entrenches the initial behaviours exhibited by separated parents, the longer the separation and non-contribution from the NRP the more pointless pursuing child maintenance appears to PWCs and ultimately deters PWCs from being proactive to seek a child maintenance arrangement.

*'I've done it all myself up to now, so I wouldn't ask now.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, Cardiff)

*'I've done it for nearly 10 years...and I think, done it without you. I can keep doing it without you.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, Newcastle)

Most providing and receiving behaviours were put in place close to the time of break-up and became the norm over time.



### 5.5.2 A desire for privacy

The desire for privacy was noted mostly amongst the NRPs, who believed that arrangements should not be discussed with strangers and should be kept within the family.

*'No one else needs to be involved. It is something just between us.'*  
(NRP, Group 3, 36+, London)

In particular, NRPs that exhibited controlling behaviours were adamant that child maintenance arrangements should remain private.

Some NRPs were of the opinion that outside agencies can add strain to already difficult circumstances. These NRPs believed that agencies such as the CSA don't fully understand the family circumstances and can cause more harm than good at a very delicate stage of the separation. It became apparent through the research that the negative legacy of the CSA brand was a key driving force for the attitudes and beliefs held by many NRPs.

*'I've never been a big believer of someone else like the government being involved in your family affairs...it's uncomfortable and I think it actually affects the relationship that you have with your child and the mother.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, London)

*'When the CSA get involved it is almost like another person who doesn't understand the family or the family set up or the arrangements or whatever you call it, I think it's almost, it's like a structure that everyone goes through and you're just like another number.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, London)

For some PWCs the feelings of failure, shame and embarrassment that their marriage is over drove a desire for privacy. These parents perceived their status as a single parent to have negative connotations and as such felt shame. The findings imply that their desire for privacy can result in information avoidance and prevent PWCs, who require support, from contacting external support organisations.

Table 5.4 summarises the key factors within attitudes, beliefs and values that drives child maintenance behaviour in this study.

**Table 5.4: Key factors within attitudes that drive child maintenance behaviour in this study**

---

**Key attitudes, beliefs and values**

- Personal circumstances form individual attitudes, beliefs and values...
  - Some PWCs agree with the principles of child maintenance but are proud that they are self reliant...
  - The passage of time entrenches behaviour...
  - Some NRPs desire child maintenance arrangements to remain private...
-

## 5.6 Affordability as a driver – research evidence

Capacity to pay does not necessarily mean that there is a willingness to pay; there is no clear evidence from this research to suggest that the level of income or indeed the traditional economic models which highlight the influence of decision making on behaviours concerning finance influence the existence/type of child maintenance arrangement.

Level of income does have a role to play but there is evidence to suggest that there are other factors which play a more significant role driving child maintenance behaviour.

Those who exhibited negative child maintenance behaviours had a range of incomes from low to high earners. For instance, some NRPs' commitment to support remained steadfast despite financial hardship. Some NRPs sacrificed their own personal needs to provide child maintenance because they morally felt that they should and wanted to regardless of their financial struggles. The research captured experience of some NRPs who slept on floors of friends and family homes because they could not afford to pay rent/mortgage for personal accommodation as well as maintenance. Other NRPs made personal expenditure cuts such as selling their car or not socialising to be able to afford to pay child maintenance.

*'This year I've been very sensible and given up my car which was very expensive and I had to lose £4000 to sell it. Has to be done.'*  
(NRP, Group 3, 18-35, London)

*'I stopped going out, stopped drinking and having a social life just to pay as much as I could for them. They were my number one priority to support.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, London)

For other NRPs their personal needs came first and they prioritised earning enough to survive and provide for their new life, before paying child maintenance.

*'I do realise that it's my responsibility to pay it and I've no problems with that and I will...but at the moment I'm steadily finding my feet, just surviving as a single entity.'*  
(NRP, Group 1, 36+, Glasgow)

*'Obviously as the partnership has broken up and then you have also moved out of the place, finances take a certain turn from being really quite comfortable to trying to maintain that as much as you can for the child or children...no one wants to live in a grotty bedsit with tins of beans, you want to have a decent standard of life as well.'*  
(NRP, Group1, 36+, London)

The research suggests that perceived inequalities in parental income can have an impact on child maintenance behaviour. If an NRP believes that the PWC is in a better financial situation than they are, this can adversely impact on the NRP support behaviour. For instance, some NRPs hold the perception that the PWC earns more money than they do and believe the PWC lives a comfortable life whilst they (the NRP) struggle to provide child maintenance contributions. This view is also common amongst some NRPs whose ex-partner had re-partnered. Once more they saw the PWC living in a household with two incomes, whilst they struggled to pay and therefore were of the view that the new joint income should be sufficient to provide for the child/ren without their contributions. For some of these NRPs, they were concerned that their contributions only served to improve the

quality of the PWC and their new partner's life, not their child/ren's quality of life. This perception was more evident in those who had no support arrangements in place.

*'Everything, the house was fully functioning and was fully paid for, the only thing that needed to be paid for was the council tax, albeit that was quite a lot. But my wife had a lot more money coming in each month than I did, there was savings, I just left with what I had.'*

(NRP, Group 1, 36+, Glasgow)

*'She didn't want me to be [involved]. She probably thinks that she is financially happy and able to have more right for the child. That's probably why she wants me to you know (not contribute), and keep me a little bit out of the situation.'*

(NRP, Group 1, 18-35, London)

The research findings suggest that additional children place extra strain on NRP resources. This can be children from the NRPs new partner's previous relationship, or when the NRP has more children of their own with their new partner.

### **5.6.1 Debt management and financial concerns**

A relationship breakdown can incur substantial levels of debt. Where debt had accumulated the management and payment of this is a challenge for separated parents and on occasion necessitated the sale of the family home.

The management of debt can cause many arguments between parents and can also contribute to negative child maintenance behaviour such as abdicating and controlling.

*'We'd built up lots of debt between us as a couple, in my name, so by the time I came out of that I was and still am in an enormous amount of debt. The kind of debt you can't pay.'*

(NRP, Group 1, 18-35, Glasgow)

*'Affordability wise it was a nightmare because I was still paying the bills and everything for his house and leaving myself with nothing.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Cardiff)

Insights from the research show that financial struggles impact on both parents. For PWCs there was the worry of the financial implications of the break-up e.g. dealing with accumulated debts, taking on household bills, being responsible for the money and providing for the needs of the child/ren.

*'I was responsible for the whole house, I had all the worry.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, London)

*'Yeah, it's a big financial struggle now and then. My place that I'm in now is £1000 a month and I'm having to pay half of it and my wage doesn't even cover it...[How do you deal with that?] I worry.'*

(PWC, Group 2, 36+, London)

NRPs also had the worry of the financial implications following the break-up and the expense associated with moving to a new place to live. In most cases the NRP moved out

of the family home and had to seek alternative accommodation and in some instances the NRP was still paying the mortgage/rent on the family home as well as paying towards their new living arrangements. Evidence from national stakeholders support this finding, highlighting the point that NRPs often struggle to cope with the change in their financial circumstances.

*'I just wanted to make sure that I didn't get to the point where I couldn't help her with everything financially and get into a position where I couldn't look after myself financially. So I wanted to make sure I had somewhere to live and that I was OK but that my daughter had all her food and everything she needed as well.'*  
(NRP, Group 3, 36+, London)

*'I was stressed because I was trying to pay my ex some money for the kids and I was paying my parents some money for staying there as well and trying to save to sort my own place. So I was quite stressed and lost a bit of weight...I think money was the biggest stress I had.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, London)

*'NRPs are struggling financially through lack of housing and lack of support. They also try to provide for children and care for them when they have contact with them.'*  
(National Stakeholder)

Taking on financial management can be difficult for PWCs where NRPs had previously managed household finances. Some PWCs struggled to take on this responsibility and recounted experiences of late payments of essential household bills and the worry and stress of the situation at that time. In many instances, PWCs received financial help from their parents when payment of bills was too overwhelming for them to manage.

*'Luckily, my mum and dad had an endowment clause which matured when I was seventeen, but they'd kept it by because I was a bit of a rogue and they didn't trust me with it back then, which did me a favour.'*  
(PWC, Group 1, 36+, London)

*'My mum and dad have been really good. They helped me financially and supported me 'til I got back on my feet.'*  
(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, Glasgow)

Table 5.5 summarises the key factors within affordability that drive child maintenance behaviour in this study.

**Table 5.5: Affordability factors that drive child maintenance behaviour in this study**

---

**Key factors within affordability**

---

- No evidence to suggest affordability alone is a key driver for an arrangement being put in place...
  - Capacity to pay does not equal willingness to pay...
  - Perceived inequalities in parental income can have an impact...
  - Changing life events can lead to an abdication of child maintenance responsibility...
-

---

**Key factors within affordability**

---

- Debt management is a difficult issue for all separated parents...
  - Taking on financial management can be difficult for some PWCs...
- 

## **5.7 Intentions as a driver – research evidence**

Intentions describe the actions a parent plans to take in relation to child maintenance. There are many PWCs who expressed positive intentions to put in place a more structured, reliable child maintenance arrangement but didn't actually manage to achieve this for a range of reasons.

### **5.7.1 Fear of worsening co-parent relationship**

PWCs often had some intention to act and involve the CSA in their arrangements but had concerns that this may not result in child maintenance being paid but instead cause further strain between themselves and their ex-partner.

*'I wonder if these agents can come and actually cause a little bit more turbulence, maybe bitterness as well...this is what I am entitled to and if you start getting on like that...at the end of the day I just kind of wanted to move on.'*

(PWC, Group 2, 18-35, London)

### **5.7.2 Concerns about CSA**

Separated parents had heard many negative stories concerning the CSA from friends, family and work colleagues. These negative experiences hampered their intentions to seek child maintenance.

*'I just think it's unfair, one of my mates had a good job, he was earning £28-30,000 and it was £600 a month that girl was getting.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Glasgow)

*'I don't have any other kids, so I don't know, it must be a nightmare, things with the CSA and people having 5 or 600 quid taken off them and being forced to chuck their jobs because they are coming home with nothing. I don't agree with the CSA at all.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Glasgow)

Furthermore, many of the NRPs perceived the statutory system to be weighted in favour of the PWC and believed that the NRP did not receive fair advice or support.

*'They always chase after the absent parent but the parent whose got care is getting help from everywhere.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Cardiff)

*'It's all in favour of the mothers isn't it. It was very difficult, you just have to stand on your own two feet. There's nothing from like the government or anything to help you.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Cardiff)

Most NRPs who took part in the study felt mistrust towards the CSA and had many negative connotations with the legacy CSA brand which lead them to believe that the CSA should

only be used when there is absolutely no contact between parents and no arrangement is in place.

*'I don't want any Government, any Association or anyone sticking their nose in, it's going well.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Glasgow)

*'The actual letters CSA... people just turn away from them at that moment because they know there's so much, you know gone wrong, people don't trust them.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 36+, London)

This view was echoed by some PWCs who were of the opinion that the CSA should only be used as a last resort.

*'You hear so many good and bad stories but you hear more of the bad. So it just seems better to keep them out than involve them I guess [reference to CSA]. It would have been the 'last chance ranch' if I had bothered with them.'*

(PWC, Group 3, 36+, Newcastle)

Other PWCs felt that it was pointless to contact the CSA as they believed that the NRP was likely to quit their job and ultimately evade payment of maintenance.

*'If you go to the CSA and ask for child maintenance they'll look at you and say what is he doing, oh he's unemployed...there's nothing there's no point in doing anything.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, London)

In other instances PWCs did not contact the CSA due to their concerns over how payment would affect their benefits.

*'I suppose I could've gone to the CSA then but because I was on income support anyway I wouldn't have had any of it...coz it doesn't benefit anybody on income support because they don't receive it then do they?'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, London)

*'And not only that, being single, what he gives me gets penalised in my income support so I just think well what's the point? What's the point in taking money off him? Like I could have gone down the child maintenance route, but what's the point of going through that? Having full blown arguments and upsetting the arrangement that we had with the baby and him and the communication that we had. All for the fact that they're going to take off him and minus it from my income support, because that's what they were going to do.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, Cardiff)

Table 5.6 summarises the key factors within intentions that drive child maintenance behaviour in this study.

**Table 5.6: Factors affecting intentions regarding child maintenance behaviour in this study**

---

**Factors within the behaviour that drives child maintenance behaviour**

---

- Intention to change often thwarted by fear of consequences...
  - Concerns over involving the CSA impacts the intention to change...
- 

## **5.8 Towards a prioritisation of the key drivers**

The primary research suggests that relationships as a group of factors are important drivers of child maintenance behaviour. The amicability of the PWC-NRP relationship and the NRPs emotional bond with the children are key predictors of positive child maintenance behaviour in this study.

The set-up of an arrangement is also affected by the ability of parents to deal with the emotions experienced by the parents at the time of separation. This is related to whether an individual tends to focus on the practicalities or emotions of the situation.

The research also found evidence pertaining to a disconnect between principles and personal circumstances. Attitudes and consequently behaviour are more likely to be driven by personal circumstances than 'doing the right thing'. There is no evidence from the research to suggest that affordability alone is a key driver for an arrangement being put in place; where NRPs can afford to pay this does not necessarily mean they are willing to pay.

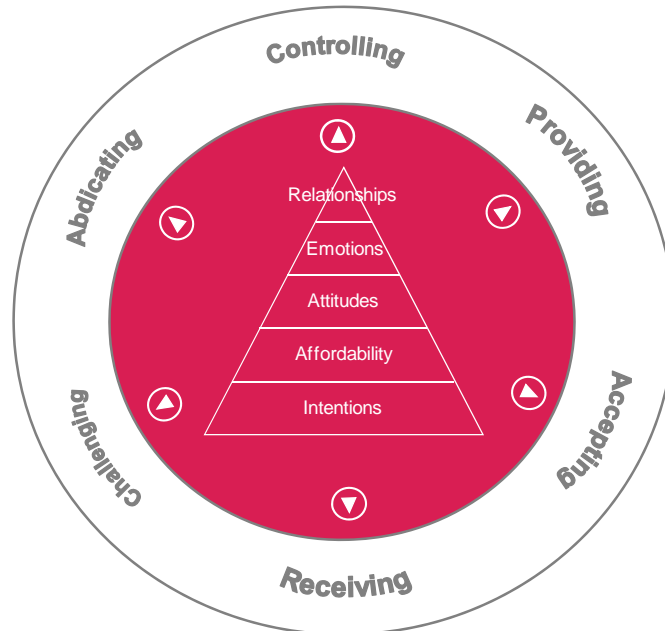
Intentions to address child maintenance issues do exist. However, behavioural intention does not always come to fruition, often being thwarted by less than favourable circumstances relating to either relationships, emotions, attitudes or affordability.

In summary, the research evidence suggests a prioritisation of the behaviours with relationships, emotions and attitudes as the key drivers of child maintenance behaviour. These are then supported by affordability and intention issues.

It is important to be aware that the prioritisation of these five behaviour drivers may vary depending on the individual circumstances. However, the research evidence suggests that, on the whole, in relation to addressing child maintenance issues, parents tend to be driven first and foremost by their relationships and emotions with attitudes, affordability and intentions having lesser power to drive behaviour.

The more positive each of the drivers is, the more likely it is that a positive child maintenance arrangement exists.

Figure 5.2: Prioritisation of drivers of child maintenance behaviour



The influence of the relationship breakdown journey was explored as part of the research. It was clear from our research that without exception, early intervention in getting an arrangement in place is critical to the continuation of that arrangement and positive child maintenance behaviours. It is difficult to attach a timeframe to “early”. The structure of the interview asked interviewees to think back to when the separation occurred and think about when would have been the best opportunity to put an arrangement in place. All recognised that this would have been best done “early”. For some this meant right at the point of separation or very shortly afterwards, but some stated not in the immediate aftermath but rather a few months after when the emotional turmoil had time to abate somewhat. Without following separated parents longitudinally it is difficult to allocate a time of weeks or months to the period after separation. It is clear from our analysis of the qualitative data that time entrenches behaviour both positive and negative. This was acknowledged by parents with statements such as “If we had sorted it at the start but it’s been the way it is for too long now...”.

Allied to early intervention in helping to put arrangements in place is the on-going management of relationships, particularly in times of change. This is vital as the research evidence suggests arrangements can suffer / breakdown at times of change. For example, the introduction of new partners and new children can place a strain on a co-parenting relationship as further complexities and financial obligations are added to the separated family’s existence.



## 5.9 Summary

- The research explored the behaviours of parents both during and post separation in relation to child maintenance arrangements. The research analysis suggests that there are six child maintenance behaviours common among those interviewed. Within these six behaviours two are categorised as positive behaviours: receiving and providing, with the remaining four being negative child maintenance behaviours including: challenging; accepting; controlling; and abdicating.
- These behaviours are not fixed, but are rather an expression of the behaviour being exhibited at the point in time of the research. These are subject to change, with some parents having exhibited several behaviours over the history of their child maintenance obligation up to the point in time of the research.
- The research identified five key drivers of child maintenance behaviour these are: relationships; emotions; attitudes, beliefs and values; affordability and intentions.
- In terms of relationships, the research evidence suggests that the past and present amicability of the PWC-NRP relationship is an important predictor of the success of an arrangement. The ability of parents to talk amicably, putting aside their differences for the needs of their children and agreement between parents on child contact can positively impact on arrangements and was evident amongst those parents who exhibited the positive behaviours of providing and receiving child maintenance.
- Emotions run high for parents when a relationship ends. The emotional response, by the parents, to the separation is a driver of child maintenance behaviour and may determine whether an arrangement is considered at the time of separation or put to one side for a period of time until the individual has dealt with their emotions. In some cases, emotional exhaustion can lead some parents to exhibit accepting behaviour due to constant arguing and frustration with NRP promises never coming to fruition. Research also indicates that the passage of time entrenches the initial behaviours exhibited by separated parents; therefore despite emotional difficulties early child maintenance set-up is critical. The research findings endorse this with most providing and receiving behaviours put in place close to the time of break-up; these positive behaviours became the norm over time.
- Attitudes, beliefs and values are formed by parents based on their personal circumstances. All parents agree with the principle of child maintenance but many see their own situation as the exception to the rule. For PWCs' exhibiting abdicating behaviours at the time of the study, they were proud that they were self-reliant and therefore had no aspirations to pursue child maintenance from the NRP. Most NRPs who exhibited negative behaviours believed the process of making arrangements should involve only the parents and not third party support; this belief may be driven by the need to control the arrangements.
- The research suggests that the level of income is not the key factor influencing the existence of a child maintenance arrangement noting that capacity to pay does not necessarily mean that there is a willingness to pay. For some NRPs, their own personal needs were prioritised over the needs of their child/ren whereas other NRPs sacrificed their own personal needs to provide child maintenance because they morally felt that

they should and wanted to regardless of their financial struggle.

- Intentions describe the actions a parent plans to take in relation to child maintenance. There are many PWCs who expressed positive intentions to put in place a more structured, reliable child maintenance arrangement but intentions were thwarted by fear of consequences of how the NRP would react or the impact of these actions on the NRP-child relationship. Separated parents had heard many negative stories concerning the CSA from friends, family and work colleagues. In most cases, these negative experiences hampered intentions to seek child maintenance.
- The research evidence suggests a prioritisation of the behaviours with relationships, emotions and attitudes as the key drivers of child maintenance behaviour. Affordability and intentions alone are not key drivers for child maintenance behaviour but they work alongside the other drivers to influence whether or not arrangements are put in place.
- It is important to be aware that the prioritisation of these five behaviour drivers may vary depending on the type of child maintenance behaviour being exhibited and the stage on the relationship breakdown journey.

# 6 WHAT OTHER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT?

## PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 6.1 Introduction

The analysis of the behaviour change literature suggested that attitude influencers and information may have a role to play in influencing behaviour. This chapter of the report presents the findings emerging from the primary research relating to this hypothesis and is structured as follows:

- Attitude influencers: exploring who they are and their role, the level of influence they have and support they require; and
- Information: outlining the role of information provision in child maintenance behaviour and the information needs of parents.

### 6.2 Attitude influencers

#### 6.2.1 Who are they?

There was a consensus between parents with care (PWCs) and non-resident parents (NRPs) on the groups of people considered to be attitude influencers.

For the most part attitude influencers were family and friends. Separated parents were far more likely to seek information from their own circle of friends than to go outside and seek support/information from third party organisations.

*'Not receptive to outside support I don't think [PWC] would have taken that route.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 2, 36+, Londonderry)

For PWCs it was their mothers and sisters that played the role of attitude influencers. For NRPs their family, friends and work colleagues took on the role of providing support and information. However, the research has found that NRPs were more likely to control the amount of information they shared with people compared with PWCs who tended to be much more open about the situation.

Attitude influencers generally felt they were well informed about the situation between separated parents including, the reason for the separation and any arrangements in place between parents. While they were sad that the split had occurred, they expressed more concern about the effect the separation had on the children.

While the research found that friends and family provided most of the support, third party organisations were also mentioned as a source of help and information. Most commonly cited examples were:

- Solicitors/lawyers;
- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB);
- Child Support Agency (CSA);
- Counsellors; and
- Mediator Services.

### **6.2.2 The role of attitude influencers**

Findings from the research suggest two types of attitude influencers - those taking a more subtle role and those willing to take a more direct role.

For the first group their role predominantly took the form of:

- Listener: 'sounding board to allow parent to think out loud';
- Comforter: 'a shoulder to cry on'; and
- Realiser: 'help parent to come to terms with the fact their relationship is over'.

*'I would have listened. I lived opposite, so [PWC] would have called in at times, for a coffee, chat, whatever. That was all the support, just normal friendship.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 2, 36+, Londonderry)

*'Yes, I would be quite a good listener and that was it. If she needed someone to take it out on when she was angry or frustrated or annoyed I was there.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 2, 36+, Londonderry)

Findings from interviews with stakeholders reinforce the importance of this role for PWCs and NRPs.

*'The big service that people want is to talk to someone. They have big problems, they are emotionally upset and some people are quite traumatic and just having a sympathetic voice on the other end is very important.'*  
(National Stakeholder)

This type of support was most common from attitude influencers nominated by PWCs, who welcomed this support and felt it was crucial in boosting their confidence and reinforcing decisions they had already made.

*'I wouldn't tell her what to do, just be there for her and make her feel good about herself and let her know she was making the right decisions.'*  
(Godmother to children of PWC, Group 2, 18-35, London)

*'I think she was glad, there would have been a group of us, I think she was glad just to have that, she knew she could sound off.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 2, 36+, Londonderry)

For the second group, their more direct role was the result of previous experience of their own separation, or helping friends and family through similar experiences in the past. For this group of attitude influencers their roles consisted of:

- Informer: 'I found out about this organisation they will be able to help you...';
- Prompter: 'have you seen ...' 'did you try...'; and
- Reassurer: 'provide them with confidence to take next steps'.

Attitude influencers who took on this more direct role were more common in the NRPs life, as they generally sought advice from family or friends who had experienced a similar situation, in particular those with experiences of the CSA.

While most support was in the form of emotional support, PWCs and NRPs also mentioned receiving practical support from family and friends. The most commonly cited examples included:

- Provision of money to help pay household bills and/or purchase child related items;
- Assistance with day childcare to enable parent to work;
- Babysitting to enable parent to socialise with friends;
- Cooking for children before parent comes home from work;
- Taking child/ren away for a break from parent (usually mum and dad of parent); and
- Flexibility in working hours to assist with additional childcare responsibilities.

In discussions with both PWCs and NRPs, there were cases when the family and friends of the other parent involved had been important influencers. This was most common regarding negotiations between parents in relation to access issues.

The findings suggest a mix of opinions on how well equipped attitude influencers were on providing information. This could be explained in part by the different roles played by attitude influencers when providing support to parents.

Findings from interviews with the attitude influencers found that many had suggested that the parents contact the CSA regarding child maintenance. Other organisations advocated included the CAB and legal advice organisations.

In most cases, if an attitude influencer signposted a parent to an outside organisation, it was towards a lawyer/solicitor, CAB or the CSA.

*'I tried to make her see sense and speak to the CSA.'*  
(Work colleague/friend of PWC, Group 2, 18-35, London)

*'I suggested that she go to Citizen's Advice to see if they could put her in the right, you know, through the right channels.'*  
(Mum of PWC, Group 3, 36+, Glasgow)

*'My brother-in-law he also works at the hospital union side of it and [NRP] said to him about it...he said the union solicitor is not just for work, he can give free advice. There was one instance to do with the house, I said 'aw [NRP] I have got the number ring them.'*  
(Mum of NRP, Group 2, 18-35, Cardiff)

*'My only advice I was able to give her, because I didn't know myself where to go, was to go to the likes of Citizens Advice [who would] point her in the right direction.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 3, 36+, Glasgow)

Those attitude influencers who were predominantly 'listeners' or 'comforters' played a more subtle role and did not feel comfortable providing specific advice on child maintenance; they had limited knowledge or experience of the situation and were therefore uncomfortable dispersing advice. Furthermore, this group were conscious of the balance between the provision of advice and interference in the lives of the parents.

*'I wouldn't really interfere with support arrangements or advice. I tend to listen because what I find in those situations is if you try to advise people, most of them don't take your advice anyway! People just want someone to listen to, because in your head, you know what you want to do, the decisions you are going to make, I wouldn't say I offered too much advice.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 2, 36+, Londonderry)

*'No I wasn't equipped because, thankfully, I have never had to go through it...I really didn't have a clue what to say to her at the time.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 3, 36+, Glasgow)

Attitude influencers who were prompters or informers often felt well equipped to provide specific advice. Their previous experiences meant they felt more comfortable relating the parent's situation to their own.

*'Yes, I felt well equipped to provide support and advice as I went through the exact same thing. But I went through it for 9 years before I got the CSA involved and I don't want her to go through the same ordeal.'*  
(Work colleague/friend of PWC, Group 2, 18-35, London)

### **6.2.3 Level of influence**

While PWCs and NRPs mentioned a range of people as attitude influencers, there were mixed views on the level of influence these individuals had on PWC/NRP decisions.

Generally, PWCs felt they were strong-minded and while they listened to the advice provided by friends and family, it did not necessarily influence their decisions. Of those who stated they did feel influenced they were likely to mention family members, such as sisters and mothers as strong sources of influence.

*'[PWC] was quite independent; she just intended to get on with it.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 3, 36+, Glasgow)

For PWCs, this influence tended to take the form of more emotional suggestions, such as:

- To have confidence to take next steps;
- To reassure them they are doing the right thing; and
- To stay focused on the children.

*'Yes, I probably did in some ways, not in money matters because Emma was doing her own thing regardless but I would say probably advice when he was annoying her on the phone. Not to rise to the bait, just ignore it because you're getting upset, the children are getting upset and its not your fault.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 2, 36+, Londonderry)

Almost all respondents suggested that the parent should go to the CSA to seek more support from the NRP. To date, none of the PWCs had acted on this advice. It is unclear if this suggests a low level of influence or if the CSA reputation was a stronger deterrent than the level of influence.

As NRPs were more likely to control the information they shared with individuals there was minimal evidence of influence on their decision making. However, when influence was exerted it was from those who had experience of a similar situation and tended to be on practical matters such as getting child maintenance arrangements in place and how much they should be paying. NRPs were also more likely to be influenced by the negative experiences of the CSA conveyed by friends and family and therefore they were not willing to approach the CSA for assistance.

Whilst most separated parents did not recognise that friends and family had influenced their decisions, these nominated individuals felt their support did have a degree of influence. However, they recognised this to be more of an emotional influence rather than providing any significant influence on actions or decisions.

*'If I had told her something that was nonsense she would have told me and not listened to me. She just needed to talk things through to get them straight in her own mind.'*  
(Brother of PWC, Group 2, 18-35, London)

*'She needs to realise things herself, as she may not agree with you and think you are trying to push her into making decisions. It is better to let her realise things when she is talking things over with you and let her make the decisions herself.'*  
(God mother to children of PWC, Group 2, 18-35, London)

The outputs of this research indicate that attitude influencers in close social networks do not have an overt, direct influence on a particular course of child maintenance action or

behaviour exhibited by a parent. Hence, attitude influencers have been designated as a contextual factor to the other more direct behavioural drivers discussed in chapter 5. There is reluctance on the part of close family and friends to interfere in what is considered to be a highly personal event and reluctance by parents to yield much control of decisions on these matters to others external to the co-parent context. What is not clear is the extent to which key people in these social networks are influential in establishing and promoting behaviour norms in relation to paying or seeking child maintenance. It is clear that they did have a big role to play in offering emotional support about the relationship breakdown and ongoing interactions with the other parent.

#### **6.2.4 Support for attitude influencers**

Attitude influencers were asked to consider what support they required to enable them to successfully carry out the role they perceive themselves to fulfil. There was a lack of recognition, by most attitude influencers, of what type of support they would require. For others they did not perceive a need for the provision of support to aid them to deliver the role they played during the separation.

*'She has always been very grateful for any support that I have given her, she is always grateful for the time that we spend together...we do try and support each other with everything that we go through, I know that she is grateful for that.'*  
(Friend of PWC, Group 3, 36+, Glasgow)

However, a few nominees felt it would be useful to have information to enable them to provide parents with more accurate information and to help them become better informed. Common examples of information gaps included:

- Information on next steps;
- Information on various support services available to separated parents;
- Legal advice/information; and
- Signposting to support services where parents can access more in-depth help.

Suggestions of additional support services which should be more readily available and better advertised to separated parents included:

- Counselling services;
- Mediation services;
- One-stop-shop for all appropriate contacts; and
- Support to help NRPs meet their new role and responsibilities.

## **6.3 Information**

### **6.3.1 Information provision**

There was widespread confusion amongst separated parents, with most parents stating that they were not aware of where to source relevant information or indeed the types of information available to them.

*'I didn't really know of any advice services so I didn't really go anywhere. I didn't really get told much to be honest, even when I went to the Working Tax Credits and*



*said we're no longer together so obviously I'm no longer entitled to it and she [PWC] obviously now gets the normal Tax Credits but no one has really given me any advice or referred me to anyone at all.'*

(NRP, Group 3, 18-35, London)

*'Well where do I start? I don't know...if I knew I would.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 18-35, Glasgow)

For many parents the CSA was considered to be the only option. For most separated parents consulted this was not regarded as a viable option, due to the negative associations with the legacy CSA brand.

*'I didn't really know where to go for help, just the CSA, there's a number you can call now.'*

(PWC, Group 2, 18-35, Cardiff)

*'The actual letters CSA, people just turn away from at the moment because they know there's so much, you know gone wrong, people don't trust them.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 36+, London)

*'Because my mum took my dad to the CSA and my mum used to get most of my dad's wages and I don't think that's right.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 18-25, Newcastle)

For some PWCs they were uncertain if the CSA was appropriate considering their personal circumstances; such as ownership of family home and NRP on income support etc.

*'I don't know, cos obviously the house is half his house, but then I can leave half to the children. I don't know, is that how it works, then what happens...I don't know what's out there to help me...I don't know if I'm being stitched up...I mean some of it I do believe.'*

(PWC, Group 3, 36+, London)

*'Very early on I think I phoned [CSA] and they said oh if he's on income support you don't get anything anyway, so that was it.'*

(PWC, Group 1, 36+, London)

Some parents were more proactive in sourcing information than others. In particular NRPs who regularly pay child maintenance were better informed about their statutory requirements than other separated parents.

*'That was the advice I'd got, that was sort of a reasonable figure that was calculated by the CSA themselves, by giving them my earnings, they sort of gave me back a figure that I should be paying back potentially...so I was directed to their website...I was paying more than I should've, I mean we're talking a couple of pounds. So I thought roughly what I should be paying was right at the time.'*

(NRP, Group 3, 18-35, London)

For other parents feelings of shame / embarrassment prevent some PWCs from seeking information and this can result in information avoidance.

*'I know you get, not tarnished, but you become labelled, I was married, we actually were married and then had the children and both my children have the same dad and I've never been married before so but I'm now a single mum.' [Is that something that holds you back from seeking further support?] 'Well maybe you know because I've got this picture now in my head that if I go somewhere for single parents...no single parents because I can imagine all these teenagers turning up pushing their buggies, but there was the other group you just said, separated families, yea that whole title, and I don't want to say stigma but that's a stigma that other people perceive isn't it.'*

(PWC, Group 3, 36+, London)

Many of the parents felt that they did not need information. A range of reasons were cited such as:

- Happy with the arrangements in place;
- Amicable relationship with the other parent; and
- Deal with things on their own.

*'It was amicable so there was no need to [seek information]. I wasn't in Fathers for Justice.'*

(NRP, Group 1, 18-35, London)

*'All my life, I've always dealt with things myself, so it wouldn't, it never occurred to me to ask anybody 'what should I do, where should I go, can you help me?' Because it's not anything that has been done to me, it's something that I've done to myself, so I've done it, I'll deal with it, I'll cope with it, it was my choice.'*

(NRP, Group 1, 36+, Glasgow)

*'It never crossed my mind and I don't think there was probably much that I could have done to help...I suppose at the time I didn't feel like I needed it.'*

(PWC, Group, 2, 36+, Londonderry)

For many parents, in particular NRPs, there is a desire for privacy/control. These NRPs believed that their support arrangement was effective and therefore were of the opinion that they had no information needs.

*'They would be strangers to me and that is not something I am comfortable with, I wouldn't go as I don't think they would understand.'*

(NRP, Group 2, 36+, Cardiff)

*'Because it is such a personal thing and every single conversation we had was painful. I think that if there was a stranger involved there, then I don't think that I could have done it.'*

(NRR, Group 3, 36+, Newcastle)

National stakeholders recognised that NRPs are less likely to seek information or see the need for information if they decided to end the relationship.

*'The NRP is more likely to be the one that has left the relationship and made the decision to leave, hence they are less likely to see the need for our support and*

*help.'*  
(National stakeholder)

The research findings identified a range of existing touchpoints that could be used as information channels; parents reported seeking support from friends, family, trusted professionals, and voluntary organisations. Empowering these everyday touchpoints to advise through information provision, could help parents to make more informed choices regarding child maintenance.

*'My dad said about the CSA and Gingerbread, I think he didn't want to see me get taken for a ride and he wanted me to have some sort of control with the children so he spoke to them and they said I only needed to be paying £400 instead of £550.'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 18-35, London)

*'There's a lot of other people who've got a lot of information for you, friends and family, who's also had a lot of problems in their life, you know breaking up and all that and they've got suggestions to try out. That was probably more of a help than anything else, you know what I mean?'*  
(NRP, Group 2, 36+, London)

### **6.3.2 Information needs**

In general parents had limited knowledge on the type of information they required; let alone where they would source such information. Signposting of information resources and third party support organisations was a clear need identified through the findings.

The research findings suggest that parents require information on their statutory rights and child maintenance entitlements to ensure that they are receiving an appropriate amount of child maintenance.

*'I don't really understand it now, I just agree to what he pays me. I would like to find out, if I do get back with him, if I'm better off, you know claiming together with him working. I would like to know that but I don't know who to talk to so I just leave it.'*  
(PWC, Group 3, 18-35, Newcastle)

Many parents also highlighted the need for information on managing child maintenance discussions. There is a need to provide practical steps on how to approach child maintenance discussions with the other parent; empowering parents with sufficient information to ultimately increase their confidence and likelihood to initiate such a discussion.

Finance was a key area of concern for most parents and hand in hand with this was the management of debts. Some parents had concerns about debts that had occurred whilst the couple were still together and when they separated one parent had been left to manage the accumulated debt. Most parents experienced financial struggles and found it hard to survive on one income when they previously paid household bills jointly. There is a need for more information on dealing with debt and managing budgets on a low income.

### 6.3.3 Information channels through which information can be fed

There are a wide range of communication channels that can aid the provision of information to separated parents. Like all communication strategies, the provision of information through channels such as internet, television, radio, leaflets, newsletters and billboards is key and ensures wide coverage.

There is also a need to provide information through everyday touch points, for example in GP clinics, community centres, workplaces and churches.

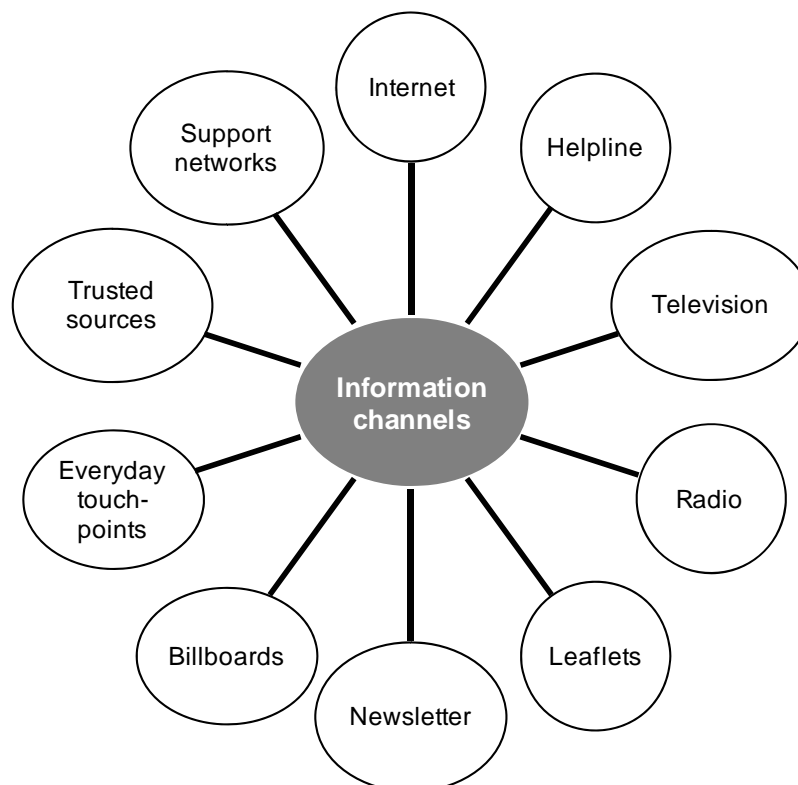
In addition to this some parents suggested that a helpline would be useful for newly separated parents to provide advice on practical things like housing and finances.

Trusted sources such as family and friends, are valuable channels for information exchange to parents. With research findings suggesting that parents are sometimes more inclined to go to a friend or family member before going to an organisation to source information.

The research findings suggest that the provision of information through support/exchange networks is a further medium to transfer information to parents. They allow for the exchange of experiences amongst separated parents which will increase knowledge and awareness of services and support available.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the channels through which parents can be reached with information to better inform them of their statutory rights/entitlements and responsibilities.

**Figure 6.1: Information channels**



## 6.4 Summary

- Family and friends were the most common attitude influencers for both PWCs and NRPs.
- The most commonly cited third party attitude influencers were the Citizens Advice Bureau and solicitors/lawyers.
- The research findings identified two types of attitude influencer: those that provided more subtle support through roles such as listener, comforter and realiser and those that provided more direct support through the role of informer, prompter and reassurer.
- Emotional support was the most common support provided by attitude influencers, although many had mentioned receiving practical support such as financial and childcare help.
- It was evident through the research that there is a lot of confusion and lack of awareness about the types of information that are available for separated parents, apart from the CSA and that in itself is not considered by many.
- Some parents are more proactive in sourcing information than others. NRPs who regularly pay child maintenance were better informed than the other separated parents. For other parents feelings of shame/embarrassment prevents some PWCs from seeking information, others have a desire for privacy / control and this can result in information avoidance.
- There are a range of existing touchpoints which could be used as information channels, such as attitude influencers, including friends and family, trusted professionals and voluntary organisations. Empowering these touchpoints with information is a way to help parents.
- Information and attitude influencers sit as contextual factors to the core drivers as there is no clear evidence from this research that they are direct drivers of child maintenance behaviour.

# 7 WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENCOURAGE CHANGE?

## EARLY THOUGHTS ON INTERVENTIONS

### 7.1 Introduction

In understanding more about behaviour, we can understand more about what influences it, what the triggers are, and what could be used to change or try and influence change in behaviour. This chapter of the report introduces the proposed suite of intervention options to address child maintenance negative behaviours found in this research. To recap, as noted earlier in Chapter 5 of the report, the findings suggests there are six types of child maintenance behaviours, namely: providing, i.e. those who are willing to provide child maintenance; receiving, i.e. PWCs who happily receive child maintenance willingly provided by NRPs; challenging, i.e. where parents challenge the current child maintenance situation; controlling, i.e. NRPs who seek to control child maintenance arrangements; accepting, i.e. PWCs who accept what is offered by NRPs; and abdicating, i.e. those who believe it is someone else's responsibility to provide/pursue child maintenance.

These six child maintenance behaviours are exhibited by both NRPs and PWCs who took part in the research. These behaviours were commonly identified amongst the 67 parents consulted within the primary research.

It is important to note that the behaviours described, and their expression across PWCs and NRPs, are a description of the behaviour being exhibited by the parent towards the maintenance arrangement, and at the point in time of the research. It must be recognised also that the behaviour of one parent does not happen in isolation and is likely to be a function of engaging with the co-parent (past and present), where a co-parent is in contact. Behaviours exhibited at the time of the research are not necessarily fixed and are subject to change. As the drivers of behaviour may change, then the behaviours exhibited may also change. Analysis of some interviewee experiences indicate that over the course of the separated co-parenting experience, several child maintenance behaviours had been exhibited up to that point in time. It is important to be mindful of the dynamic and changeability of exhibited behaviours when considering potential interventions to address negative child maintenance behaviours.

This chapter will focus on the four negative behaviours common amongst the separated parents interviewed. These are:

- Challenging: both PWCs and NRPs exhibit this behaviour;
- Controlling: largely an NRP behaviour;
- Accepting: largely a PWC behaviour; and
- Abdicating: both PWCs and NRPs exhibit this behaviour.

It is fair to suggest that some behaviours may be more receptive to intervention than others. Accepting behaviour and challenging behaviour may be more receptive to intervention than controlling behaviours, with abdicating perhaps being the most resistant behaviour to address in both PWCs and NRPs. The thinking behind this suggestion stems from the behavioural change theories that suggest the first step in addressing an issue is to be problem aware. For example, some 30 years ago, smoking was not considered to be a health problem, so a starting point was to make citizens problem aware. With challenging and accepting behaviours, parents consistently stated that they were aware that in their view the arrangement in place was not satisfactory so as a minimum were “problem aware”. Parents with controlling and abdicating behaviours are in a different place with regards to problem recognition.

The rest of this chapter illustrates how the research insights underpinning behavioural drivers link specifically to practical interventions that might be considered. This chapter is structured as follows:

- Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for challenging behaviour;
- Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for controlling behaviour;
- Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for accepting behaviour;
- Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for abdicating behaviour; and
- Summary of interventions.

## **7.2 Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for challenging behaviour**

### ***7.2.1 What do challengers look like?***

Challenging behaviour runs on a spectrum from an expressed desire to change to taking steps towards change. Most parents exhibiting this behaviour are expressing a desire to change but having tried to tackle their issues have run out of steam. This behaviour was exhibited by both PWCs and NRPs, although, NRPs are more likely to be taking change action than PWCs. This is likely to be linked to the fact that maintenance travels from the NRP to the PWC / child(ren) and as such the NRP has more control over providing, the nature of the child maintenance provision or simply not providing.

### ***7.2.2 What do we know about PWC challengers?<sup>22</sup>***

The primary research engaged with PWC challengers who were mainly unemployed between the ages of 18-35; of those that were employed incomes ranged from £7,200 to £34,000. Most PWC challengers had separated less than 5 years ago, have limited contact with their ex-partner and poor child access arrangements in place. PWC challengers mainly received irregular support, which took the form of:

- Gifts;
- Irregular payments; and
- Clothing.

The evidence suggests that PWCs' exhibiting challenging behaviour at the time of interview are both emotional and practical in terms of their personalities and are unlikely to seek support from outside agencies. PWC challengers would like to have a more structured arrangement in place, and while some have taken steps towards this, others have simply given up due to the emotional upheaval it caused.

### ***7.2.3 What do we know about NRP challengers?***

In contrast to PWCs' exhibiting challenging behaviour, NRP challengers in our sample were mostly in full-time employment with an income range of £14,000 to £32,000 and over 36 years of age. They made regular payments and ad hoc purchases, with regular child contact, but had limited or poor contact with the other parent. As with PWCs, NRP challengers were emotional and practical, but unwilling to seek help from outside organisations.

### ***7.2.4 Linking driver insights to intervention for challenging behaviour***

There are a wide range of reasons why separated parents express a desire to change but are unable to take steps towards successfully changing their arrangement status. These are broadly related to relationship and affordability drivers, specifically:

---

<sup>22</sup> Outlined descriptions are based on a small number of parents that participated in the primary research. This is a qualitative piece of research and these descriptions should not be extrapolated to the wider child maintenance population.



- Parental relationships;
- Child contact;
- Financial contributions; and
- Negative impact of new partners.

For some parents the whereabouts of the other parent are unknown and they require support through a trace facility to locate the other parent. For others, relationships are strained, poor communication exists and in some cases the family have to deal with the result of negative NRP behaviour, such as alcohol/drug abuse or domestic violence. As summarised in Table 7.1, these issues require the provision of support in the form of counselling and mentoring services to help parents instigate change in their current arrangement status. Alongside these support services, networking with other parents provides a good opportunity for parents to hear stories from others in similar situations and may provide valuable insights on how they should manage their child maintenance arrangement going forward.

**Table 7.1: Interventions to combat limited parental relationships**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor communication.</li> <li>• NRP whereabouts unknown.</li> <li>• Negative NRP behaviour.</li> <li>• Hostility towards PWC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring service to empower PWC to pursue an arrangement.</li> <li>• Trace facility.</li> <li>• Family counselling service.</li> <li>• NRP counselling and networking and exchange for NRPs.</li> </ul>

The level and quality of NRP-child contact time is a contentious issue for some separated parents in the study which can impact on child maintenance behaviour. The research suggests that there is a need for mediation and mentoring services (Table 7.2) to help parents reach an amicable agreement on child contact. For instance, the provision of a mediation support service for parents who exhibit challenging behaviour can aid discussions towards the agreement of what constitutes quality NRP-child contact and this would help to manage parent expectations.

**Table 7.2: Interventions to combat conflict concerning child contact**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of NRP contact is poor.</li> <li>• Child contact.</li> <li>• NRP limited emotional bond.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation service to discuss and agree quality NRP-child contact and what this should look like.</li> <li>• Mentoring service and networking/exchange for parents.</li> <li>• Family mediation service.</li> </ul>

A relationship breakdown can incur substantial levels of debt. Insights from the study suggest that in most cases, separated parents struggle to manage this debt which can negatively impact on child maintenance behaviour. While this was a common occurrence amongst those exhibiting challenging behaviour it was also present where other behaviours

were exhibited. There is a real need for parents to receive financial planning advice to help them to manage their debt and prioritise their income to ensure child maintenance payments are appropriate.

There is also evidence from the study to suggest that PWC challengers desire change but are fearful of how the NRP will react, for other PWCs they are frustrated with the NRP constantly promising but nothing coming to fruition. These PWCs would benefit from the provision of a mentoring service to empower them with negotiation skills which would motivate them to continue to seek an effective support arrangement.

In other instances, NRP challengers would like to reduce their child maintenance contributions due to their perception that the PWC earns a greater income. In this situation it would be useful to provide counselling to help the NRP deal with their emotions at the time of separation and the perceived inequalities in parental income, in turn helping them to recognise the benefit of providing for their child/ren.

**Table 7.3: Interventions to combat conflict concerning financial contributions**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial struggle, dealing with debt.</li> <li>• Frustration with NRP.</li> <li>• NRP control of child maintenance.</li> <li>• Fear over NRP reactions to challenge.</li> <li>• Perceived income inequalities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial planning advice.</li> <li>• Mentoring to empower PWCs to hold difficult conversations.</li> <li>• Mentoring to provide PWC with negotiation skills to discuss arrangements with NRP.</li> <li>• Mentoring to empower PWCs to hold difficult conversations.</li> <li>• Counselling service to deal with perceived inequalities and benefits of providing for child/ren.</li> </ul>

Evidence from the primary research suggests that the interaction of a new partner in some instances can result in high emotions being displayed and a deterioration of the co-parenting relationship, with the other parent challenging the current support arrangement in place. As outlined in Table 7.4, there is a need for mediation between parents to help them discuss and deal with their emotions concerning the introduction of a new partner. In addition, networking between parents to hear stories from other parents in a similar situation and how they manage the influence of a new partner.

**Table 7.4: Interventions to combat the negative impact of new partners**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deterioration of co-parenting relationship.</li> <li>• Emotional response cause of friction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking/exchange for parents to hear stories about how other parents manage the influence of a new partner.</li> <li>• Mediation service to help parents discuss changing circumstances and impact.</li> </ul>

A reluctance to seek support from outside agencies is an important consideration in this context as earlier indications show that on a theoretical level, those exhibiting challenging

behaviour were problem aware and perhaps more likely to be receptive to intervention. But this may not be easily put in place, as many interventions are delivered by third parties. It is not to say that an intervention may not be well received but delivery mechanisms need to be carefully considered. This may also be linked to a view that it is not the behaviour of the challenging parent that requires addressing but the parent with whom the challenger is interacting. This raises issues pertaining to the need to address the behaviour of both parents as it is their interaction on behavioural driver issues that produce a positive or negative maintenance outcome.

### 7.2.5 Real life stories from a challenger perspective

The insights that can be derived from these real life stories are consistent with common themes that are noted within challenging behaviour.

PWC: Nicole's story	NRP: Laurence's story
<p><i>'I have a son who is six years old and he lives with me all of the time. I had a very on and off relationship with his father and have been separated from him for about nine months now. I'm relieved as he was very controlling and sometimes aggressive and abusive. I wanted my son to have a relationship with his Dad but when he went to see him, he would be left watching TV at his Gran's. He has no interest in his school progress or anything really. I receive no financial support and it's a struggle. Anytime I mention money, we argue, so I decided to stop him from seeing my son and just wanted to avoid the situation completely – what else could I do? My ex wants contact with our son and has got a solicitor and a mediation session has been organised. I'm really worried about it but will give it a go for our son's sake. I will let him have contact as long as he spends quality time with him and contributes towards his upkeep.'</i></p>	<p><i>'I wasn't happy, I just didn't want to be there, I probably married the wrong person, sounds terrible doesn't it. When we separated I just moved out, I was happy enough to keep paying the mortgage and let them live there. I still pay the electricity bill out there, I pay the rates, I pay the mortgage and I pay a couple of wee savings things for the girls. I was guilt ridden you know. I felt by doing that I was doing my bit and I still am. I have the children every weekend but now I feel that I am being used so she can go and have a good time. She has someone else now and if he is going to be on the scene, on a regular basis, I have got to change things. When we get divorced, I don't want to be paying a mortgage for someone else to be living there or paying bills for somebody else living under my roof. I would rather pay a lump sum and say that's what you deserve.'</i></p>
<p><b>What insight does this give us about PWC challenger behaviour?</b></p>	<p><b>What insight does this give us about NRP challenger behaviour?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quality of NRP contact is poor</b> – Nicole recognises the importance of co-parenting, but differences in views on parenting mean she is struggling to make it work.</li> <li>• <b>Negative NRP behaviour</b> – Nicole has been worn down by the arguing about parenting and this has resulted in no formal arrangement being put in place. She is reluctant to push the issue as it has proved both emotionally difficult and fruitless in the past.</li> <li>• <b>Change ready</b> – Nicole's recognition of the importance of co-parenting suggests she may be receptive to making an arrangement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New partners influence</b> – Laurence's new partner has encouraged him to challenge the current arrangements because of re-partnering on the PWC side.</li> <li>• <b>Child contact</b> – the scheduling of child contact is becoming an issue for Laurence who feels that it could become a contentious issue.</li> </ul>

PWC: Nicole's story	NRP: Laurence's story
that produces the best outcome for the child.	
Potential interventions	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation service</li> <li>• Family counselling service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring service</li> <li>• Networking/exchange for parents</li> </ul>

## 7.3 Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for controlling behaviour

### 7.3.1 What do controllers look like?

Insights from the study suggest that controlling behaviour is exhibited by NRPs. Controlling behaviour happens where NRPs do not trust the PWC to allocate child maintenance to the child/ren or are the primary decision makers in the nature of child maintenance arrangements.

### 7.3.2 What do we know about controllers?<sup>23</sup>

The primary research engaged with controllers who were mainly aged between 18 to 35 years. These separated parents tended to be in full-time employment and reported income ranging from £7,738 to £70,000 per annum. Most NRP controllers described their current co-parent relationship to be amicable with no child contact access issues, with most reporting regular child contact. These parents had separated less than five years ago and had put in place one of the following types of child maintenance arrangements:

- Buying essential items when required, such as clothing for the child/ren;
- Paying money directly to the child/ren; and
- Irregular payment of child maintenance and/or gifts.

Most NRP controllers were of the opinion that child maintenance arrangements should remain private between parents and not involve third party support organisations. However, a few NRP controllers expressed some interest in relation to receiving support from a third party organisation.

### 7.3.3 Linking driver insights to intervention for controlling behaviour

There are a wide range of reasons why NRPs control a child maintenance arrangement. These are broadly related to relationship, emotion, attitudinal and affordability drivers, specifically:

- Child contact;
- PWC use of child maintenance;
- Fluctuating income; and

<sup>23</sup> Outlined descriptions are based on a small number of parents that participated in the primary research. This is a qualitative piece of research and these descriptions should not be extrapolated to the wider child maintenance population.

- Desire for privacy.

Some NRPs exhibit controlling behaviour due to their frustration concerning PWC control of child access. Feelings of anger, frustration and a sense of grief concerning their loss of child contact can drive some NRPs to actively control the financial side of a child maintenance arrangement. In these situations there is a need for individual support for the NRP to mentor them on how to channel their anger and exhibit more positive behaviours towards the PWC and children; realising the detrimental impact of this emotion on their co-parenting relationship. Mentoring would be followed by mediation support between parents to help them deal with the existing friction and frustration and to consider next steps required to reach a satisfactory agreement.

**Table 7.5: Interventions to combat strained relationships due to control of child access**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frustration.</li> <li>• Anger.</li> <li>• Hostility and loss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation service to help parents to discuss child access and agree arrangements without causing conflict.</li> <li>• Mentoring service to encourage PWC to discuss child access with NRP and come to a mutual arrangement.</li> <li>• Networking and exchange for NRPs to hear how other parents manage child contact.</li> </ul>

Most NRP controllers reported a lack of trust towards the PWC and how their financial contributions were spent, desiring recognition for their contributions by the child/ren. NRPs have concerns that their money will not be spent on their child/ren but will be used to pay towards the PWC's lifestyle. These views can cause arguments between parents and tends to result in the NRP buying gifts for the children instead of paying cash directly to the PWC. The introduction of mediation support between parents would provide a neutral forum for parents to consider the reasons for the NRPs' lack of trust.

This service would result in the development of a contract between both parents which would outline how child maintenance contributions would be spent and how the PWC could provide reassurance to the NRP. In extreme cases there may be a need for the provision of non-conflict legal advice to assist parents in reaching a satisfactory arrangement for all parties. Networking events for parents to learn from other NRP experiences is another potential intervention to instigate the transition from a controlling behaviour towards a more positive providing behaviour.

**Table 7.6: Interventions to combat NRP concerns regarding PWC use of child maintenance**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of trust towards PWC.</li> <li>• Desire for recognition.</li> <li>• Preference to buy rather than pay.</li> <li>• Conflict/arguments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation service – development of a contract.</li> <li>• Networking and exchange for NRPs.</li> <li>• Mediation service and financial planning</li> </ul>

advice.

- Non-conflict legal advice.

Some NRPs reported controlling their financial contributions due to fluctuating income and in some cases the need to make personal sacrifices in order to contribute something. The accumulation of debt associated with the relationship is also a factor that drives controlling behaviour exhibited by the NRP. The research suggests that NRPs have differing expectations concerning the cost of raising a child. A third party assessment of individual finances and a confidential and unbiased calculation of child maintenance would provide NRPs with a realistic and believable view in relation to their financial responsibilities towards their child/ren. The provision of financial planning advice would assist NRPs to manage their irregular income and budget for future child maintenance payments.

Management of debt associated with separation may require mediating services between parents and the involvement of non-conflict legal advice.

**Table 7.7: Interventions to combat fluctuating income**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides as and when financially viable.</li> <li>• Makes personal sacrifices.</li> <li>• Accumulated debt associated with separation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third party assessment of individual finances.</li> <li>• Financial planning advice to help manage income and budget for out-goings.</li> <li>• Mediation and non-conflict legal advice.</li> </ul>

The research findings suggest that NRP controllers believe that their child maintenance arrangement is a private matter between parents and desire to maintain the status quo for their support arrangement, often responding angrily towards PWC threats of involving the CSA. In some cases this is prompted by the belief that the CSA is biased towards the PWC. There is a general need to develop a social marketing campaign to dispel negative attitudes towards the CSA service and to promote unbiased services for both PWCs and NRPs. On top of this there is a need to help NRPs deal with their anger towards and fear of involving the CSA through the provision of anger management information and a mentoring service. This will help NRPs recognise the negative impact of a controlling behaviour on a co-parenting relationship and provide them with the tools to make steps towards changing their negative child maintenance behaviour.

**Table 7.8: Interventions to combat NRP desire for privacy**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belief child maintenance is a private matter between parents.</li> <li>• Anger towards threat of CSA.</li> <li>• Belief CSA is biased towards PWC.</li> <li>• Desire to maintain status quo.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and/or communications to address negative attitudes towards CSA service and promote Child Maintenance Options Service.</li> <li>• Anger management advice/support.</li> <li>• Marketing and/or communications to address negative attitudes towards CSA service and promote Child Maintenance Options service.</li> </ul>

- 
- Mentoring to help NRP to recognise the negative impact of controlling on a co-parenting relationship.
- 

### **7.3.4 Real life stories from a controller perspective**

The insights that can be derived from this real life story are consistent with common themes that are present within controlling behaviour.

---

#### **Trevor's story**

*'We were at the point where we were staying together for the children; we were arguing and couldn't agree on anything. I just decided I'm going. I worried about the kids and who was looking after them. I wanted to give them money, because I wanted to make sure they were getting what they needed. I didn't want them going without just because I wasn't there. I couldn't trust her at that point with money because I know she was probably drinking and partying every weekend. I tended to give [child] money and told her 'don't be telling your mummy, keep it to yourself'. Now if they need trainers I will give her [PWC] the money for them as you couldn't choose for them and she would show me the receipts.'*

---

#### **What insight does this tell us about NRP controller behaviour?**

- **Lack of trust towards PWC** - Trevor did not trust the PWC to spend child maintenance directly on the children and wanted proof of purchase on items for the child; and
- **Desire for recognition** - Trevor gives money directly to the child so the child knows he still cares and so the child benefits from the money not the PWC.

---

#### **Potential interventions**

- Mediation service.
  - Networking/exchange for NRPs.
- 

## **7.4 Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for accepting behaviour**

### **7.4.1 What do acceptors look like?**

Accepting behaviour is where PWCs are unhappy with arrangements/no arrangement and accept the status quo due to a desire not to upset/worsen the co-parent relationship with the NRP.

### **7.4.2 What do we know about PWC acceptors?<sup>24</sup>**

The research engaged with acceptors who were mostly over 36 years of age and in part-time employment with incomes ranging from £5,130 to £57,000. Most had been separated less than 5 years and while they had limited or no contact with the NRP, there was some regular child access. Arrangements involved a mixture of gifts and ad hoc clothing and irregular payments. Most of the PWC acceptors would seek help from an outside agency

---

<sup>24</sup> Outlined descriptions are based on a small number of parents that participated in the primary research. This is a qualitative piece of research and these descriptions should not be extrapolated to the wider child maintenance population.

and described their personality type as practical and emotional.

### 7.4.3 Linking driver insights to intervention for accepting behaviour

There are a range of reasons why some PWCs choose to accept the status quo even through they are unhappy with the arrangement/no arrangement. These are broadly related to emotion and affordability drivers, specifically:

- Self-reliance;
- Emotional exhaustion;
- Concerns over finance; and
- Concerns about the welfare of the children.

PWCs in the study who exhibit accepting behaviour tend to believe that they have no choice but to be self-reliant due to their individual circumstances. This negative behaviour is inextricably linked to the length of time the PWC has been accepting their current situation. For some PWCs they have accepted not having an arrangement in place because the whereabouts of the NRP are unknown. For these PWCs they require a trace facility to help them find the NRP and to help them initiate contact. For others they are too proud to contact the NRP because they believe the NRP abandoned them, these parents might benefit from hearing how other parents overcame these circumstances.

The research evidence suggests that for some PWCs child maintenance is not considered to be a priority. These parents require guidance on practical matters such as housing and dealing with their finances so they can deal with their greatest concerns first and then consider the benefit of seeking financial contribution from the NRP. Other PWCs did not recognise that they had a role to play in encouraging an NRP to provide child maintenance. In this situation the PWCs need to be mentored to understand their role and the benefits of encouraging NRP involvement.

**Table 7.9: Interventions to combat PWCs self-reliance**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRP whereabouts unknown.</li> <li>• Too proud to contact NRP.</li> <li>• Child maintenance is not a priority.</li> <li>• Perception they have no role to play concerning seeking child maintenance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trace and introduction facility.</li> <li>• Networking/exchange for PWCs.</li> <li>• Helpline for PWCs to provide advice on practical things like housing and finances.</li> <li>• Mentoring service to make PWCs aware of their role to encourage NRPs.</li> </ul>

There is some evidence from the research to suggest that emotional exhaustion can lead some parents to exhibit an accepting behaviour. Through exploring the rationale for this behaviour it became evident that the frustration of promises never coming to fruition and the resultant anger were the main reasons for a PWC feeling emotionally exhausted and ultimately accepting an ineffective arrangement. The provision of a mentoring service would encourage the PWC to deal with their frustrations and minimise the risk of negatively impacting on existing co-parenting relationships. Networking with other PWCs would provide the opportunity for parents to hear stories from other parents in similar situations about what steps they have taken to ease the emotional stress of child maintenance arrangements. This forum would also be a good signposting facility to receive advice and



information from different support organisations.

**Table 7.10: Interventions to combat PWC emotional exhaustion**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRP promises don't come to fruition.</li> <li>• Anger/frustration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory policy to ensure NRPs set-up an arrangement.</li> <li>• Mentoring service and networking/exchange for PWCs.</li> </ul>

Like most separated parents in the study, PWC acceptors regularly face financial struggles and make personal sacrifices in order to provide for their child/ren's needs. The provision of financial planning advice would help PWCs manage their money and budget for bills on a low income. Debt is a difficult issue for PWCs to manage. In most cases, the PWC is left to manage the payment of this debt and this is when non-conflict legal advice would provide PWCs with the necessary direction to organise a repayment plan with the assistance of the NRP.

Other PWC acceptors receive some form of child support but the type and regularity of this support is controlled by the NRP. These PWCs are not happy with the support but accept the status quo due to a desire not to upset/worsen the co-parent relationship with the NRP. In order to instigate behavioural change amongst these PWCs there is a requirement for a mentoring service to empower PWCs and provide them with appropriate negotiation skills to have confidence to initiate child maintenance discussions.

In general, the research suggests that PWCs who exhibit accepting behaviours are poorly informed about their parental rights and child maintenance entitlements. Empowering these PWC acceptors with information on their rights and entitlements would encourage them to consider changing their current child maintenance behaviour.

**Table 7.11: Interventions to combat concerns over finances**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial struggle.</li> <li>• Controlled by NRP.</li> <li>• Personal sacrifices made by PWC.</li> <li>• Debt management.</li> <li>• Not aware of rights/entitlements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial planning advice.</li> <li>• Mentoring service to empower PWCs and provide them with appropriate negotiation skills.</li> <li>• Non-conflict legal advice.</li> <li>• Advice for separated parents to help them know their rights and entitlements.</li> </ul>

Concern for the welfare of the child/ren tends to be the rationale for why some PWCs choose to exhibit accepting behaviour. On one side the impact of negative NRP behaviour on the child/ren can drive a PWC to accept no arrangement and continue to maintain no NRP-child contact. The involvement of family counselling may help family members deal with the outcomes of NRP anti-social behaviour e.g. addiction support group for family. Alternatively, some PWCs accept the current level of support provided from the NRP for fear that pursuing changes to an arrangement would negatively impact NRP-child contact. In this circumstance a mentoring service to empower PWCs with appropriate negotiation

skills to manage NRP reaction to child maintenance discussions would help to minimise the impact on NRP-child contact.

**Table 7.12: Interventions to combat concern over welfare of child/ren**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of separation on child/ren.</li> <li>• Negative NRP behaviour.</li> <li>• Fear that pursuing changes to an arrangement would negatively impact NRP-child contact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on how to minimise the impact of separation on child/ren.</li> <li>• Family counselling service.</li> <li>• Mentoring service to empower PWCs and provide them with appropriate negotiation skills.</li> </ul>

#### **7.4.4 Real life stories from a PWC acceptor perspective**

The insights that can be derived from this real life story are consistent with common themes that are present within accepting behaviour.

##### **Vicky's story**

*'I suppose my relationship with him just broke down completely through him being very jealous, aggressive and controlling, very dominant. When we broke up it was mostly relief, I felt back in control of my life. I paid off whatever debts there were. It was stressful as everything was down to me but on the other hand it was good because I could make my own decisions. The big fear was being able to cope financially. We have shared custody but he has control, he can get them when he wants but if I need him to look after them he can say yes or no which can be frustrating. He doesn't pay anything and I suppose it's because I felt guilty because I caused the break-up and he didn't want the marriage to end. I just wanted to go easy on him because I wanted to get out of the situation, the solicitor thought I was crazy – I probably was! I suppose I knew in principle that he had a responsibility to pay towards them but I don't know if it was pride or I just wanted to get rid of him, I wanted to stand on my own two feet and I didn't want him involved.'*

##### **What insight does this give us about PWC accepting behaviour?**

- **NRP negative behaviour** – the NRP was aggressive and controlling towards Vicky.
- **Debt management** – Vicky took on the debts from the relationship and paid these off herself.
- **Controlled by NRP** – Vicky feels that the NRP controls the visiting and when she needs him, he often makes it difficult.
- **Too proud to contact NRP** – Vicky's pride and feelings about the break-up have prevented her from pursuing a financial child maintenance arrangement.

##### **Potential interventions**

- Counselling service.
- Mediation service.
- Networking/exchange for PWCs.
- Financial planning advice.

## **7.5 Making the link from insight underpinning behavioural drivers to intervention for abdicating behaviour**

### ***7.5.1 What do abdicators look like?***

Abdicating behaviour was exhibited by both PWCs and NRPs throughout the research. This behaviour is where parents believe it is someone else's responsibility to provide child maintenance.

### ***7.5.2 What do we know about PWC abdicators?<sup>25</sup>***

The evidence from the research found that PWC abdicators did not have child maintenance arrangements in place. Most were separated for over five years and neither they nor their child/ren had a relationship/contact with the NRP. PWC abdicators were a mix of full-time employed and unemployed, with reported income ranging from £2,400 to £34,000. Most would not seek support from an outside agency. This presents a particular difficulty in encouraging the uptake of interventions delivered by third parties by this group.

### ***7.5.3 What do we know about NRP abdicators?***

NRP abdicators were a mix of full-time employed and unemployed, with incomes ranging from £3,438 to £45,000. Most had been separated for less than five years, but had little or no contact with either the PWC or their child; as a result there were no maintenance arrangements in place. NRP abdicators were generally practical and felt they would seek support if they needed it.

### ***7.5.4 Linking driver insights to intervention for abdicating behaviour***

There are a range of reasons suggested by the research why separated parents choose to abdicate their responsibility to provide/receive child maintenance. These are broadly related to relationship and emotion drivers, specifically:

- Limited parental relationships;
- PWC self-reliance;
- Limited/no emotional bond with child; and
- Concerns around child maintenance provision.

As was the case with challengers, abdicating behaviour is exhibited by separated parents when there is limited or no contact between parents and these parents believe that it is someone else's responsibility to provide child maintenance. For some parents the whereabouts of the other parent are unknown and they would require support through a trace facility to locate the other parent. For some PWC abdicators they have no desire for contact from the NRP due to negative NRP behaviour. These parents may require family counselling services to deal with the outcomes of the negative NRP behaviour, followed by statutory enforcement for the NRP to provide maintenance but with protection for the PWC

---

<sup>25</sup> Outlined descriptions are based on a small number of parents that participated in the primary research. This is a qualitative piece of research and these descriptions should not be extrapolated to the wider child maintenance population.

and family preventing contact by the NRP. Mediation services would help separated parents who exhibit abdicating behaviour to deal with underlying trust issues working towards building a co-parenting relationship.

**Table 7.13: Interventions to combat limited parental relationships**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unknown whereabouts.</li> <li>• No contact wanted by PWC.</li> <li>• Negative NRP behaviour.</li> <li>• Hostile relationship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trace facility.</li> <li>• Statutory enforcement with protection for PWC and family.</li> <li>• Family counselling service to help deal with negative NRP behaviour.</li> <li>• Mediation service to deal with any underlying trust issues working towards building a co-parenting relationship.</li> </ul>

As was the case with PWC acceptors, most PWC abdicators interviewed were proud that they were self-reliant and as such expressed no desire to encourage the NRP to provide child maintenance. Some of these parents felt abandoned by the other parent and reported feeling lonely and in some instances insecure as a result of the separation. These feelings could be alleviated through joining a networking forum with other separated parents, who can share experiences and learn coping mechanisms that can help parents to overcome insecurities and pride, ultimately with the aim of initiating a change in their behaviour by encouraging these parents to seek a child maintenance arrangement. The provision of a telephone helpline to provide advice for PWCs on practical matters such as housing and finance would also help parents to address the pressing issues in their life that can sometimes prevent a PWC from considering child maintenance.

The research suggests that most PWC abdicators were poorly informed about their parental rights and child maintenance entitlements. Empowering these PWC abdicators with information about their rights and entitlements may well encourage them to consider changing their current child maintenance behaviour.

**Table 7.14: Interventions to combat PWC self-reliance**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loneliness and insecurity.</li> <li>• Too proud to contact NRP.</li> <li>• Pride in their achievements.</li> <li>• Child maintenance is not a priority.</li> <li>• Lack of awareness of rights/entitlements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking/exchange for PWCs.</li> <li>• Helpline advice for PWCs on practical issues like housing and finances.</li> <li>• Advice for separated parents to help them know their rights and entitlements.</li> </ul>

Like NRP controllers, NRP and child contact can be a contentious issue amongst some abdicating parents and may be a potential sticking point around child maintenance arrangement discussions. The primary research found that for some NRP abdicators restricted/no child contact is the sole reason why child maintenance support is not provided. In these circumstances there is a need to provide mediation services amongst parents to encourage them to learn more about each other and to establish how NRP-child contact

can be fostered and how to deal with difficulties/issues experienced that currently block contact or prevent emotional bonds being created.

Most NRP abdicators believed that their non-payment of child maintenance did not impact on the child/ren for reasons such as the PWC earns more income than they do, the PWC's family support the child/ren or the PWC has re-partnered. An extensive communication piece is required to counteract these views alongside parenting classes for NRPs to provide them with an understanding of their role and responsibilities to the child, regardless of the involvement from others.

Where uncertainty concerning paternity exists and where the NRP's name was not placed on the birth certificate this can result in non-payment of child maintenance. The provision of counselling would help these NRPs deal with the doubt over paternity and guide them with the appropriate knowledge of how to go about confirming their paternity.

**Table 7.15: Interventions to combat limited/no emotional bond with child/ren**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No contact no child maintenance contributions.</li> <li>• Contact restricted by PWC.</li> <li>• Uncertainty over paternity.</li> <li>• Belief that lack of child maintenance does not impact on child/ren.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory policy to ensure separated parents set-up an appropriate support arrangement.</li> <li>• Mediation service.</li> <li>• Counselling for NRPs.</li> <li>• Parenting classes for NRPs to understand their role and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Communications activity to demonstrate what positive child maintenance behaviour looks like.</li> </ul>

Most separated parents in the study who exhibited abdicating behaviours had debt problems and reported struggling financially to provide sufficiently for their own personal needs. There is a need to provide generic financial planning advice to teach parents how to budget and plan for expected outgoings. All NRP abdicators who noted that they could not afford child maintenance prioritised their own personal needs over the needs of their child/ren. In these circumstances the introduction of statutory enforcement policy should be considered to ensure NRPs set-up appropriate support for their child in line with their income.

Some PWCs choose to abdicate their responsibility to encourage the NRP to provide child maintenance; this abdication was driven by the fear of the NRP regaining control over them and their child/ren. This is a sensitive situation which may require the PWC to receive reassurance that the payment of child maintenance does not necessitate contact with the NRP. In other cases, a mentoring service for PWCs would provide negotiating skills to help PWCs discuss arrangements with the NRP and ensure they maintain the control of the arrangement.

**Table 7.16: Interventions to combat concerns over the provision of child maintenance**

Driver	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial struggle, dealing with debt.</li> <li>• Fear of NRP control.</li> <li>• Can't afford child maintenance – prioritise own personal needs over child.</li> <li>• PWC has re-partnered.</li> <li>• Concern over impact on benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial planning advice.</li> <li>• Mentoring to provide PWCs with negotiation skills to discuss arrangements with NRP.</li> <li>• Statutory policy to ensure NRPs set-up appropriate support for their child in line with their income.</li> <li>• Advice for separated parents to help them know their rights and entitlements.</li> </ul>

### 7.5.5 Real life stories from the abdicator perspective

The insights that can be derived from these real life stories are consistent with common themes that are present within abdicating behaviour.

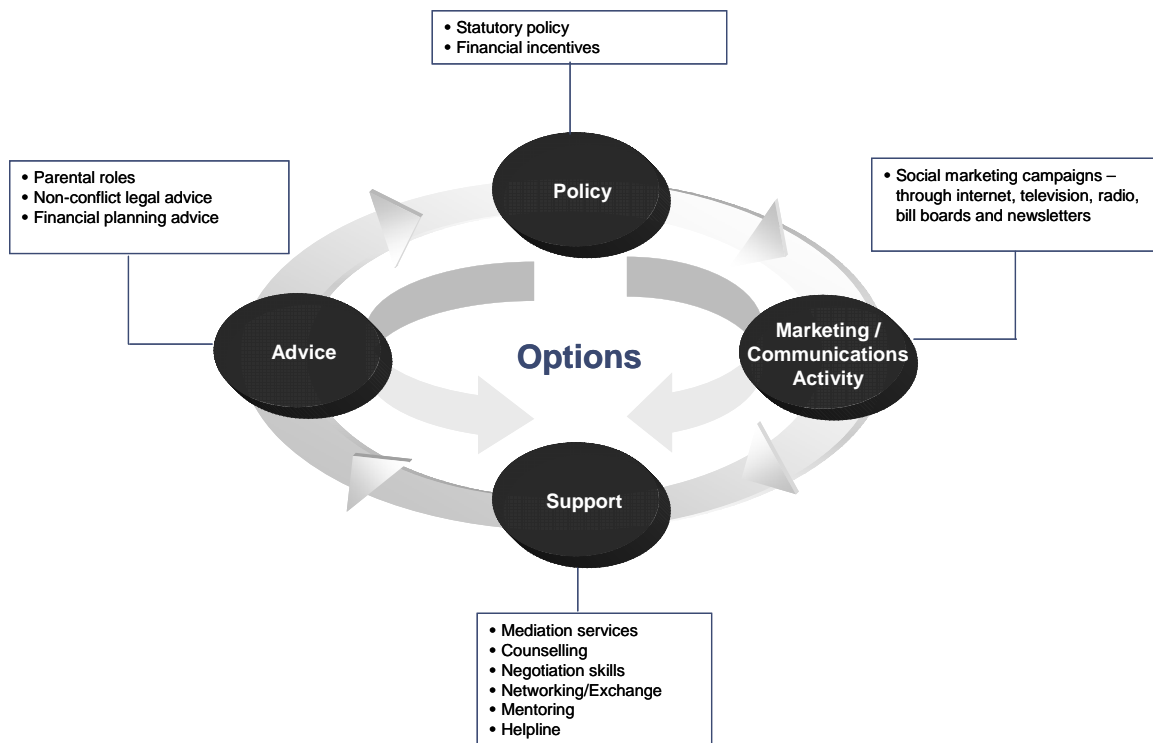
Jill's story	Stanley's story
<p><i>'All he ever wanted to do was drink and drink and drink and then one day I had left [child] in the house with him and she wouldn't stop crying and he gave her a bit of drink, then I thought sod this, I'm away. So I walked out and I thought, 'yeah keep it, I can get another house'. I paid off all the debt, that's why I now hate debt. At the beginning I thought 'how am I going to do it' but then I left everything behind and had to start all afresh and then I thought 'you know what, I can do it by myself'. I didn't approach him because I thought he would kick off. I thought 'it's his drink that he always wants so he can stick his drink'. Now I sit back and think, well I've done it for nearly 10 years, and I think, done it without you, I can keep doing it without you. I wouldn't approach him now anyway. I think I have done it for this long; I can keep doing it now. I have got nothing to thank him for. I don't want him coming back into my daughter's life now, I would rather it be her choice.'</i></p>	<p><i>'It was never my idea to start a family and it wasn't my idea to break up. I had financial problems she knew that when we got married, then she wanted to start a family and I knew we couldn't afford it. She had post natal depression and financial problems got worse and it got too much for her in the end. I didn't want to leave but I had to leave her and the baby. I couldn't afford to pay child support and she didn't want any money as she knew I couldn't afford it. I really didn't have any money for myself, never mind [child] at the time. I wasn't welcome in the house and he was a bit young to be staying away, so I didn't really see very much of him at all. I still feel bad about that and it might have been better but she moved in with this new guy, he got a job down the south, and they just moved down there. I can't afford to go gallivanting and I wouldn't be welcome, he has got a new dad effectively because I am not there at all. It's difficult.'</i></p>
<p><b>What insight does this give us about PWC abdicating behaviour?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Negative NRP behaviour</b> – this was viewed as negative by Jill because of the NRP's alcohol problem.</li> <li>• <b>Fear of NRP control</b> – Jill was afraid to approach the NRP because of his addiction issues and she feared this would end in an argument.</li> <li>• <b>Too proud to contact NRP</b> – Jill is proud of what she has achieved without the help of</li> </ul>	<p><b>What insight does this give us about NRP abdicating behaviour?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Contact is restricted by PWC</b> – Stanley feels the PWC controls child access and he would be made unwelcome if he went to visit.</li> <li>• <b>PWC has re-partnered</b> – Stanley feels that now the PWC has re-partnered they can provide for the child and the child no longer needs him as a father.</li> <li>• <b>Financial struggle</b> – Child maintenance</li> </ul>

Jill's story	Stanley's story
the NRP.	payments were a struggle because of his financial situation.
Potential interventions	Potential interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling service</li> <li>• Mentoring service – negotiation skills</li> <li>• Networking/exchange for PWCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation service</li> <li>• Financial planning advice</li> <li>• Online/telephone advice</li> </ul>

## 7.6 Summary of interventions

The proposed interventions to address all negative behaviours are grouped into four broad categories: namely: policy, marketing / communication, support and advice.

Figure 7.1: Overview of key interventions areas



When considering the four negative child maintenance behaviours it is fair to suggest that some may be more easily addressed than others. Accepting behaviour and challenging behaviour may be more easily addressed/managed than controlling behaviours, with abdicating the hardest behaviour to address in both PWCs and NRPs. However, it should be noted that the behaviour of both parents needs to be addressed to produce more positive child maintenance outcomes as it is their interaction on behavioural driver issues that produce a positive or negative maintenance outcome. For example, in the case of a PWC exhibiting challenging behaviour where the co-parent NRP is exhibiting controlling behaviour, providing help for the PWC around how to manage conflict concerning discussions on child maintenance contributions may have some but not extensive impact if the controlling behaviour is not addressed.

### **7.6.1 Policy**

In some cases support and advice services are not sufficient on their own for various reasons such as NRP refusal to make payments, whereabouts of NRP unknown, PWC fear of NRP involvement etc. Consequently this may require the introduction of statutory policy interventions. Possible policy interventions include the provision of financial incentives to separated parents such as a 'first mover' reward for PWCs, this would provide these parents with special tax breaks or top-up their child benefit allowance as an incentive to put an arrangement in place. Stakeholders recognised the importance of policy integrated with financial incentives and advocated an integrated model to target change.

*'Most effective is integrated interventions where policy initiatives, legislation if necessary, and fiscal incentives, services and marketing are part of an integrated package.'*

(National Stakeholder)

### **7.6.2 Marketing / Communications Activity**

There is a role for marketing and communications to address/influence negative child maintenance behaviour and promote positive child maintenance behaviour. Ensuring information provision is adequate where required is also key.

The specific role for communications will vary during different stages of the behaviour change journey and should be framed in the context of other interventions. However, it is likely to include some of the following:

- Dispel negative behaviours associated with the payment of child maintenance and negative attitudes towards the CSA service;
- Promote the benefits of formalised arrangements;
- Promote support networks available and where to seek information;
- Promote the role of others – friends and family;
- Provide awareness of tools e.g. life change tool to aid parents during destabilising periods; and
- Demonstrate what positive child maintenance behaviour looks like.

### **7.6.3 Support**

The primary research suggests that relationship issues and emotions experienced by separated parents are the main two drivers of negative child maintenance behaviours.

There are a wide range of support services which could be tailored to meet the needs of separated parents, depending on the negative child maintenance behaviour they exhibit. There are a range of relationship issues such as negative NRP/PWC behaviour, restricted child access and strained co-parenting relationships that would benefit from individual mentoring and counselling sessions to deal with the underlying issues. For some relationships there may also be a need for follow-on mediation sessions to help parents to rebuild their co-parenting relationship.

The research suggests that separated parents experience a wide range of emotions such as anger, frustration, fear and pride. Talking about these emotions to a third party can help parents to deal with these emotions and through the transfer of new skills such as how to



negotiate or communicate effectively can help parents take a step towards more positive child maintenance behaviour.

There are five main types of support services these are:

- **Mediation service:** A mediating service to help separated parents to improve their communication and ultimately focus on implementing support arrangements for their child/ren;
- **Counselling service:** One-to-one counselling service to help parents deal with specific issues or emotions they face that impact negatively on child maintenance arrangements;
- **Mentoring:** A service to enable separated parents, in particular PWCs, to feel empowered to pursue support arrangements/changes from the other parent. This may involve role playing various scenarios to provide parents with confidence to initiate discussions or react to potential outcomes;
- **Networking/Exchange:** A service for separated parents with the purpose being: to source relevant information and to provide an environment for separated parents to meet with other parents in similar situations; to raise awareness of support available through support organisations; and
- **Helpline:** A confidential helpline to provide advice for newly separated parents on practical things like housing and finance as well as the facility to signpost parents to various support organisations, depending on their particular need.

Some of these are already being delivered through third party support organisations and would perhaps benefit from promotion across the separated family population.

#### **7.6.4 Advice**

Advice includes both the provision of information leaflets and face-to-face delivery of advice. There are a wide range of issues faced by separated parents that would benefit from the provision of general information, in particular in the following areas:

- Importance of co-parenting;
- How to deal with anger management;
- How much it costs to raise a child;
- Knowing your rights;
- Dealing with conflict; and
- How to minimise the impact of a separation on children.

This advice would help to manage parent's expectations and empower them with knowledge to confidently take steps towards displaying more positive child maintenance behaviours.

Most separated parents face financial issues during/after separation and in some cases incur a substantial amount of debt. The research findings identified a real need for the provision of free, face-to-face advice in the following areas:

- **Financial planning:** An advice service delivering information on how to deal with debt, how to manage money, living on a low income and the importance of saving;
- **Non-conflict legal advice:** The provision of legal advice for separated parents that does not encourage parents to cause conflict between each other e.g. Resolution; and
- **Parental roles:** Parenting classes for separated parents to understand their role and responsibilities towards a child regardless of the quality of their relationship with the other parent.

# APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To identify key factors that feature in individual behaviour.
- To identify key contextual factors associated with individuals' behaviour.
- To identify those behavioural factors (individual and contextual) that are most closely associated with having no maintenance arrangement – and importantly those which the Commission would be able to influence in order to change behaviour and encourage an arrangement to be put in place.
- To identify if those behavioural factors which can be changed (previous bullet) vary between differing segments of PWCs and NRPs (PWCs and NRPs should be segmented according to the differing levels of influence that individual and contextual factors have on their behaviour).
- To identify how change in behaviour can be instigated – this may involve a variety of interventions, using differing messages and mediums for effectively engaging the target groups of NRPs and PWCs.
- To explore the views of the target groups of the identified interventions prior to testing these in order to enhance and develop their effectiveness.
- To explore the views of parents with effective child maintenance arrangements to ensure that any interventions do not undermine existing positive behaviours.

- What would successfully influence parents with no arrangement or an ineffective arrangement to change their behaviour?
- Are the effects of these stimuli likely to differ depending on variations between parents e.g. NRPs and PWCs or segments of parents (as above)?
- Do different groups of parents require different stimuli to effect/instigate a change in behaviour?
- How can the Commission engage third party influencers such as family and friends to reinforce the importance of paying child maintenance?

## APPENDIX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aizer, A. & McLanahan, S.S. (2006) The Impact of Child Support Enforcement on Fertility, Parental Investments, and Child Well-Being. *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol 41 (1): 28-45)

Atkinson, A. & McKay, S. (2005) *Investigating the Compliance of Child Support Agency Clients*. DWP Research Report No. 285. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

Atkinson, A., McKay, S. & Dominy, N. (2006) *Future Policy Options for Child Support: The Views of Parents*. DWP Research Report No. 380. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

Bandura, A. (1995) *Self-Efficacy in Changing Societies*. Cambridge University Press.

Bandura, A. (1982) Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*. Vol. 37(2): 122-147.

Bandura, A. (1986) *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: a Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1977) Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 84: 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1977) *Social Learning Theory*. New York: General Learning Press.

Bell, A., Kazimirski, A. & La Valle, I. (2006) *An investigation of CSA Maintenance Direct Payments: Qualitative study*. DWP Research Report No. 327. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

Bradshaw, J., Stimson, C., Skinner, C. & Williams, J. (1999) *Absent Fathers?* London: Routledge.

Bradshaw, J. & Millar, J. (1991) *Lone Parent Families in the UK*. Department of Social Security Research Report No. 6.

Bradshaw, J. & Cusworth, L. (2009) *A comparison of Policies designed to Enhance Child Well-Being*. Social Policy Research Unit, University of York.

Bradshaw, J., Holscher, P. & Richardson, D. (2007) An index of child well-being in the European Union. *Journal of Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 80: 133-177.

- Bradshaw, J. (2006) *Child Support*. Available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/9781859355039.pdf> [Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009]
- Burgess, A. (2006) *The Costs and Benefits of Active Fatherhood. Evidence and insights to inform the development of policy and practice*. Available at: <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=0&clD=586> [Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009]
- Brekke, K. A., Kverndokk, S. & Nyborg, K. (2002) An economic model of moral motivation. *Journal of Public Economics*, Vol. 87: 9-10.
- Bullen, C. (2007) *Child Maintenance: The eligible population in Great Britain*. DWP Working Paper No. 41. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.
- Bunting, L. & McAuley, C. (2004) Teenage pregnancy and parenthood: the role of families. *Child and Family Social Work*, Vol. 9(3): 295-303.
- Bunting, L. & McAuley, C. (2004) Teenage pregnancy and motherhood: the contribution of support. *Child and Family Social Work*, Vol. 9(3): 207-215.
- Clarke, B. Motivation and Behaviour Change. Available at: <http://www.brightplace.org.uk/pdfs/motivate.pdf> [Accessed 3rd April 2009]
- CMEC (2007) *CMEC Evidence based actionable insights and implications*. Oxford Strategic Marketing.
- CMEC (2008) *CMEC – Customer Identification: Segments reference book*. Oxford Strategic Marketing.
- CMEC (2008) *CMEC Insights Workstream Final Project Report*. Oxford Strategic Marketing.
- COI & CSA. *CSA Information Needs of Non-couple Parents*. Define Research and Insight: London.
- Connolly, A. & Kerr, J. (2008) *Families with children in Britain: findings from the 2006 Families and Children Study (FACS)*. DWP Research Report No. 486. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.
- DWP (2007) *Working for Children*. Available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2007/childpoverty/childpoverty.pdf> [Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009].
- DWP (2006) *A New System of Child Maintenance*. Available at: [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/childmaintenance/csa\\_report.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/childmaintenance/csa_report.pdf) [Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009].

- Darnton, A. (2008) *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. A practical guide: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*. A Government Social Research Report.
- Darnton, A. (2008) *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*. A Government Social Research Report.
- Dawney, E. & Shah, H. (2005) *Behaviour economics: seven principles for policy makers*. London: NEF (The New Economics Forum).
- DWP. (2006) *A New System of Child Maintenance*. Available at: [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/childmaintenance/csa\\_report.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/childmaintenance/csa_report.pdf) [Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009].
- DoH. (2009) *DH Brief Guide, Thinking About Health-related Behaviour*.
- Hardeman, W., Johnston, M., Johnston, D., Bonetti, D., Wareham, N. & Kinmouth, A. (2002) Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in Behaviour Change Interventions: A Systematic Review. *Psychology and Health*, Vol. 17(2): 123-158.
- Halpern, D., Bates, C., Mulgan, G., Aldrighes, S., Beales, G., and Healthfield, A. (2004). *Personal responsibility and changing behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy*. Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office.
- Huang, C.C. (2009) Mothers' Reports of Non-resident Fathers' Involvement with their Children : Revisiting the Relationship Between Child Support Payment and Visitation. *Family Relations Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, (58): 54-64)
- Kahneman, D 2002. *Maps of Bounded Rationality: a Perspective on Intuitive Judgment and Choice*. Nobel Prize Lecture, December 2002.
- Kiernan, K. (2006) Non-residential Fatherhood and Child Involvement: Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study. *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 35 (4): 651-669
- King, V. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2006) Non-resident Fathers' Contributions to Adolescent Well-Being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Vol. 68 (August): 537-557
- Knott, D., Muers, S. & Aldridge, S. (2008) *Achieving Culture Change*. The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. London: Cabinet Office.
- Koball, H. & Principe, D. (2002) Do Non-resident Fathers Who pay Child Support Visit Their Children More? The Urban Institute, Series B, No. B-44: 1-7.
- Lefebvre, R.C. (2000) Theories and models in social marketing. In PN Bloom & GT Gundlach (Eds.), *Handbook of Marketing and Society*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mellor, J., Armstrong, D., Megaw, S., Lennon, K. & Paton, L. (2008) *Child Support Agency*

*Client Insight Research*. DWP Research Report No. 471. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

Panter-Brick, C., Clarke S. E., Lomas, H., Pinder, M. & Lindsay, S. W. (2006) Culturally compelling strategies for behaviour change: A social ecology model and case study in malaria prevention. *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 62: 2810 – 2825.

Peters, E.H., Argys, L.M., Howard, H.W., & Butler, J.S. (2004) Legislating Love: The Effect of Child Support and Welfare Policies on Father-child Contact. *Review of Economics of the household*, Vol. 2: 255-274.

Prochaska, J. & Velicer, W. (1997) The transtheoretical Model of Health Behaviour Change. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, Vol. 12 (1): 38-48.

Richards, B., Botterill, J. & MacRury, I. (2000) *The Dynamics of Advertising*, pp. 157. Routledge.

Ridge, T. (2005) Supporting Children? The Impact of Child Support Policies on Children's Well-being in the UK and Australia. *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 34(1): 121-142.

Skinner, C., Bradshaw, J. & Davidson, J. (2007) *Child Support Policy: An International Perspective*. DWP Research Report No. 405. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

Skinner, C. & Meyer, D. R. (2006) After all the policy Reform, is child support actually helping low-income mothers? *Benefits*, Vol. 14 (3): 209-222.

Sorensen, E. & Zibman, C. (2000) *To What Extent Do Children Benefit from Child Support*. Washington: The Urban Institute.

Talbot, C., Adelman, L. & Lilly, R (2005) *Encouraging take up: Awareness of and attitudes to Pension Credit*. DWP Research Report No. 234. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

The Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act 2008 (Chapter 6). London: HMSO. Available at: [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/pdf/ukpga\\_20080006\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/pdf/ukpga_20080006_en.pdf) [Accessed 1st April 2009].

*The Week Magazine*. 26<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

Wikely, N., Ireland, E., Bryson, C., & Smith, R. (2008) *Relationship separation and child support study*. DWP Research Report No. 503. Norwich: HMSO.



This report presents findings from a qualitative research study, commissioned by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission. The work was initiated to help the Commission understand: the behaviours of those not taking responsibility for paying child maintenance; which behaviours can be influenced; and in what ways. The research consisted of a comprehensive literature review, interviews with stakeholders, 67 in-depth interviews with separated parents, and 13 ethnographic case studies.

The report examines the behaviours of separated parents, the key drivers of these behaviours and tries to prioritise these in a child maintenance behaviour model. In addition, the research was able to provide suggestions for potential interventions to help tackle the more negative child maintenance behaviours.

If you would like to know more about the Commission's research, please contact:

[www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact](http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact) or  
[www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact/contact.asp](http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact/contact.asp)



Published by the Child Maintenance  
and Enforcement Commission

March 2011

[www.childmaintenance.org](http://www.childmaintenance.org)  
Research report no. 1  
ISBN 978-1-84947-446-7