

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 503

Relationship separation and child support study

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

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First Published 2008.

ISBN 978 1 84712 386 2

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Acknowledgements

All the parents who took part in the survey deserve our sincere thanks for their time, help and enthusiasm. We would like to thank Karl Olsen at the Department for Work and Pensions for his support and valuable feedback at various stages in the study. Also, thanks to Christine Skinner for the input of her expertise throughout the study and Alice Reeves for her help on the final stages of the report.

A number of NatCen colleagues have contributed to the project, and we would like to extend our thanks to Cathy O'Donnell, Mari-Carmen Huerta, Kevin Pickering, Tristan Childs, Mike Hart, Gursharanjit Gill, Frances Carpenter, Pauline Burge, Christine Massett and all the NatCen interviewers who worked on the survey. Our particular thanks go to Anne Kazimirski who directed most of the study.

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Abbreviations

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service
CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing
C-MEC	Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission
CSA	Child Support Agency
CTB	Council Tax Benefit
CTC	Child Tax Credit
DSS	Department of Social Security
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
FRS	Family Resources Survey
HB	Housing Benefit
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs
IS	Income Support
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LCA	Latent Class Analysis
NatCen	National Centre for Social Research
NDLP	New Deal for Lone Parents
NRP	Non-resident parent
PWC	Parent with care
WTC	Working Tax Credit

Glossary

Benefit cases/on benefit	This refers to the parent with care (PWC) being on income-related benefits. So 'benefit cases', even when referring to non-resident parents (NRPs), refers to the benefit status of the PWC ¹ .
Compliance	The extent to which an NRP adheres to a maintenance agreement.
Contact	Contact between the NRP and child/children after separation. This includes different levels and types of contact, for example overnight stays, telephone or written contact.
Disregard	The amount of income (e.g. in child maintenance) that a claimant can keep before it affects their benefit entitlement.
Enforcement	Actions carried out, usually by a Government agency, to ensure that maintenance owed is paid.
Informal support	Any other kind of money or financial exchange between the NRP and PWC or child that is not part of a maintenance arrangement, for example, paying bills, buying things directly for the child or PWC.
Maintenance	Money that the NRP pay to the PWC, usually a set sum, agreed upon in advance, paid at regular intervals for the care of the children.

¹ For PWC, this information was taken from what they reported in the interview; for NRPs, this information was taken from the CSA database.

Non-CSA	Separated parents who have never used the Child Support Agency.
Non-resident parent	The parent who the child or children do not live with after separation, often, but not always the father.
PWC	The parent who the child or children live with after separation, often, but not always the mother.

Summary

The report presents findings from a major survey of the experiences and views of separated parents, in relation to child maintenance. Included in the survey were parents with care (PWCs) and non-resident parents (NRPs), parents who had never been involved with the Child Support Agency (CSA) and CSA clients. Early findings were published in an interim report in late 2007².

The research aimed to gather the views of separated parents on, and their possible reactions to, the Government's plans for the redesign of the child support system³. Just under 2,000 interviews were carried out with a nationally representative sample by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) during 2007. Parents were sampled in four groups:

- CSA PWCs (i.e. PWCs who were clients of the CSA);
- CSA NRPs (i.e. NRPs who were clients of the CSA);
- non-CSA PWCs (i.e. PWCs who were **not** clients of the CSA);
- non-CSA NRPs (i.e. NRPs who were **not** clients of the CSA).⁴

The demographic profile of separated families

Chapter 2 reviews the demographic profile of separated families. The findings from this chapter begin to indicate the presence of four distinct types of PWC (Sections 2.3, 2.6 and 2.7).

² Kazimirski, A. and Ireland, E. (2007) *Survey of relationship breakdown and child maintenance: Interim report*. DWP Research Report No, 468. Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

³ Enshrined in the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Bill 2008, which was going through Parliament at the time of writing.

⁴ In spite of significant efforts, the response rate among the non-CSA NRPs was lower than expected. See Section 1.3.3 for further explanation. Thus, this summary focuses on the first three sample groups only.

- **CSA benefit PWCs**, obliged to use the CSA. Relationship with ex-partner may or may not have been acrimonious. Most economically disadvantaged of all the groups.
- **CSA non-benefit PWCs** have used the CSA voluntarily. Most acrimonious relationship with ex-partner, of all the groups, indicating that they may have chosen to go to the CSA due to difficulties setting up private maintenance arrangements.
- **Non-CSA 'happy' PWCs**. Less acrimony between co-parents, more likely to have higher incomes. Non-use of the CSA may be due to a lack of need.
- **Non-CSA 'unhappy' PWCs**. Never in a relationship and/or no current contact with co-parent, possible bad experiences with co-parent, more likely to have lower incomes. Non-use of the CSA may be due to a lack of information (about the CSA and/or the co-parent).

Contact arrangements

Chapter 3 aims to understand parents' views and experiences in relation to contact between NRPs and children.

- Around seven in ten NRPs had contact with their children (Section 3.3).
- Where some contact arrangements were in place, non-CSA PWCs were happier with the arrangements than CSA clients. Contact was more likely to cause tension between co-parents for CSA clients, than for non-CSA PWCs (Section 3.3).
- All parents who were unhappy with their contact arrangements said that the amount of contact was too little. NRPs were more likely to be unhappy than PWCs (Section 3.3).
- Where no contact arrangements were in place, CSA NRPs were more likely to be unhappy about this than PWCs (Section 3.3).

Financial arrangements

Chapter 4 explores the detail of separated families' financial arrangements relating to the maintenance of children.

- Around six in ten non-CSA PWCs had no maintenance arrangement at all; about three in ten had a private arrangement; and one in ten were subject to a court order or consent order (Section 4.2).
- On average, non-CSA PWCs reported receiving almost twice as much in maintenance as CSA PWCs (Sections 4.4 and 4.8).
- CSA PWCs were less likely than other parents to regard the amount of child maintenance being paid as fair (Section 4.5).

- Only a minority of parents discussed financial matters with their ex-partners. CSA NRPs were more comfortable about doing this than PWCs (especially those who were clients of the CSA) (Section 4.6).
- Three-quarters of CSA NRPs claimed to be providing informal support (i.e. payments or purchases for their children or the PWC), whilst fewer than half the CSA PWCs acknowledged receipt of such assistance (Section 4.7).

Attitudes towards child maintenance and the role of NRPs

Chapter 5 examines parents' attitudes towards child maintenance.

- Nearly all parents thought that NRPs have an obligation to pay child maintenance.
- In situations where the NRP was not to blame for the separation or they did not want the child, most parents felt that the obligation still stood, however, CSA NRPs were slightly less likely to feel this way than PWCs.
- In situations where a PWC has a new partner or an NRP has another child from a new relationship, CSA NRPs were more likely than PWCs to think that the maintenance obligation should alter.
- The majority of parents felt that paying full maintenance implied a right to contact with children. However, CSA NRPs were more strongly committed to this principle than PWCs.
- Half of PWCs and about four in ten CSA NRPs thought that NRPs who shared the care of their children roughly equally should still pay child maintenance.
- Almost eight in ten CSA NRPs thought that frequent overnight stays should imply a reduction in the maintenance obligation, compared with about half of PWCs.

Compared to PWCs, CSA NRPs were more likely to think that:

- maintenance levels should depend on both parents' incomes;
- providing informal financial support should reduce maintenance obligation; and
- it is better for NRPs to buy things for children themselves rather than pay regular child maintenance.

Information and support

Chapter 6 looks at the sources, methods and types of information separated parents have used in the past and might use in the future.

- Sources of information most commonly consulted in relation to child maintenance were Jobcentre Plus or New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) Advisers (PWCs) and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) (CSA NRPs) (Section 6.3).

- Most parents said they would consider using a professional organisation if they needed information or support in relation to child maintenance in future. The organisations they would be most likely to use were the CAB; the CSA or another Government agency; or a solicitor/lawyer (Section 6.3).
- Parents had most commonly received information about child maintenance through face-to-face meetings and identified this as their preferred method for doing so in future.
- Key areas in which parents felt they may require information and support in future were: working out how much maintenance to pay or collect; what to do if there are problems with child maintenance payments; and deciding whether or not to set up formal child maintenance arrangements (Section 6.5).

Parents' views on the new emphasis on private arrangements

Chapter 7 explores parents' views on private arrangements, and the extent to which they would feel confident about making their own child maintenance arrangements.

- Whilst around half of non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs thought parents should ideally make maintenance arrangements privately between themselves, only a fifth of CSA PWCs shared this view (Section 7.2).
- The main advantages associated with private arrangements were: being quicker and easier; helping to reduce conflict; and being more private. The main disadvantages were: the NRP might not be willing/able to pay; they may cause conflict; and that they require parents to have a good relationship (Section 7.3).
- CSA PWCs took a much more negative view of private maintenance arrangements than other parents and had greater concerns about monitoring and support in the case of problems (Section 7.3).
- Around half of non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs felt confident about being able to make a private arrangement using new information and guidance services, compared to about a quarter of CSA PWCs (Section 7.4).
- Around four in ten CSA NRPs felt confident about being able to make a private arrangement with support from a trained, impartial adviser, compared to about two in ten PWCs (Section 7.4).
- The key changes that parents thought the Government should focus on in relation to supporting parents to make private arrangements were: providing opportunities to speak to someone face-to-face; and offering a local service (Section 7.5).

Parents' views on the mechanics of the new statutory system

Chapter 8 investigates parents' views on a number of proposed changes to the child support system, as well as the parallel proposals to encourage joint birth registration.

- More than eight in ten parents said that both parents' names had been included on their children's birth certificates and a clear majority supported the principle of joint birth registration (Section 8.2).
- About eight in ten CSA PWCs and two-thirds of CSA NRPs said they would be likely to use the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC) for assessing the amount of maintenance payable. Almost half of non-CSA PWCs also said this (Section 8.3).
- Charging a flat rate fee for the initial maintenance calculation would be likely to deter parents from using C-MEC, particularly CSA PWCs (Section 8.4).
- Nearly eight in ten CSA PWCs said they would be likely to use C-MEC for the collection and enforcement of maintenance, compared to about three in ten non-CSA PWCs (Section 8.4).
- A great majority of parents supported the idea that PWCs should be allowed to keep all, or some, of the child maintenance paid by their ex-partners in addition to any social security benefits received. However, around four in ten did support a partial, rather than a full, benefit disregard (Section 8.5).
- A full benefit disregard is likely to operate as a disincentive to labour market participation for, at most, about one in ten CSA PWCs (Section 8.5).
- All parents, particularly CSA NRPs, preferred the use of net rather than gross income to calculate maintenance levels (Section 8.6).
- PWCs clearly supported the idea of directly transferring income data from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to C-MEC. CSA NRPs were much more ambivalent about this idea, although more than half did agree with it (Section 8.7).
- A clear majority of parents believed that direct deduction of maintenance from a NRP's salary would be the most effective method of dealing with non-compliance (Section 8.7).

Conclusion

The study's findings indicate considerable support among parents for the principle that parents should make private child maintenance relationships where possible and suggest that effective (and relatively intensive) information and guidance services could play a key role in facilitating this. However, it has also shown that more than two-thirds of the CSA's existing clientele saw themselves as likely to

use C-MEC⁵, with CSA PWCs expressing especially negative views in regard to the possibility of making private arrangements.

A number of factors have emerged as potential threats to the feasibility of private arrangements. The strong connection in parents' minds between contact and maintenance shown by past research is supported by this study, with NRPs displaying a particularly strong commitment to this link. Therefore, where there are disputes over contact, it is likely to be particularly difficult for parents to agree maintenance arrangements between themselves.

In addition, a number of issues have been identified about which PWCs and NRPs appear to have differing opinions, particularly in regard to the proper effects of additional factors on the maintenance obligation. NRPs feel that shared care, informal support, a new child and (it is implied) an increase in the PWC's income ought rightly to reduce their obligation; PWCs by and large disagree. Where so many causes of potential disharmony are present, it is clear that encouraging more parents to make private arrangements will not be an easy task. The fact that only a minority of separated parents ever discusses financial issues with their ex-partners, also highlights the radical nature of the proposal.

⁵ This proportion assumes the abolition of the obligation for PWCs on benefit to use the CSA.

1 Introduction

This report presents findings from a major survey of the experiences and views of separated parents, particularly in relation to child maintenance. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned a consortium led by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)⁶ to carry out this research. The survey covered both parents with care (PWCs) and non-resident parents (NRPs), and included parents who had never been involved with the Child Support Agency (CSA) as well as those who were CSA clients. It was, therefore, wider in scope than the 2001 Baseline Survey (Wikeley *et al.*, 2001), which was confined to the CSA client group. The present study, as well as analysing separated parents' current arrangements for child maintenance, child contact and related matters, also examines parents' attitudes and likely behavioural responses to the main features of the planned reforms to the existing child support system. It, therefore, explore parents' views of the advantages and disadvantages of private arrangements (reflecting Government plans to remove barriers to parents opting for these), as against use of the new Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC), which will replace the CSA. Parents' experiences and views of information and support services in relation to child maintenance are also analysed. An interim report, setting out some of the early findings from the research project, was published late last year (Kazimirski and Ireland, 2007).

1.1 Background

The CSA was established in 1993 as an Executive Agency of the then Department of Social Security (DSS), now the DWP, to administer the child maintenance system brought in by the Child Support Act 1991. Under the arrangements in place before 1993, child maintenance was not the responsibility of a single organisation. In some cases child maintenance orders were made by the courts; in other cases parents came to private agreements (sometimes given official status as 'consent orders' by the courts); and in yet others, arrangements were made through the 'liable relative' sections of the then DSS. In some cases no maintenance arrangement

⁶ In collaboration with Nick Wikeley (University of Southampton) and Christine Skinner (University of York).

at all was in place. Child maintenance levels were based on discretionary criteria and were criticised for producing inconsistent and unpredictable outcomes for families.

The 1993 changes involved the use of a statutory formula for the calculation of child maintenance, which was to be administered by a Government agency (the CSA). These reforms were intended to increase both the number of parents receiving child maintenance and the amount they received, as well as recouping from NRPs (originally known as 'absent parents') some of the costs of social security paid out to families on Income Support (IS).⁷

The implementation of the original child support scheme faced a number of difficulties from its outset in April 1993. The complexity of the statutory formula meant that only a minority of parents understood how their child support assessments had been arrived at. The CSA also experienced widespread non-compliance from NRPs, many of whom objected to the Agency's assessments overturning previous court orders or private agreements over child maintenance. Where the PWC was on IS, there was little incentive for either parent to cooperate with the CSA, as the PWC's benefit entitlement was reduced pound for pound by the amount of any child maintenance paid. In addition, the CSA had its own operational problems, especially with its IT system (see Wikeley, 2006: Chapter 5).

After 1997 the incoming Labour Government set out as one of its key targets the ambition of eradicating child poverty by 2020, and halving child poverty by 2010. As part of its strategy, the Government brought forward a series of reforms to the child support system designed to simplify the formula, speed up the process of calculating child maintenance and ensure that PWCs on IS saw a direct financial benefit when child maintenance was in payment. At the same time the CSA's enforcement powers were strengthened. These changes, mainly contained in the Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000, were not actually brought into force until March 2003.

The Government's original intention was that all parents who were dealt with under the 'old scheme' (i.e. whose cases were taken on by the CSA between 5 April 1993 and 2 March 2003) would be transferred to the 'new scheme' (which has covered all new cases since 3 March 2003 and is governed by the changes made by the 2000 Act). In the event this transfer has not proved possible, although some 'old scheme' cases have been converted into 'new scheme' cases, e.g. because of a linkage between parents involved in separate child support cases. Consequently, the CSA is responsible for administering two separate schemes in parallel; of its total caseload of nearly 1.4 million cases, 696,800 are still governed by the old scheme and a further 659,900 are subject to the new scheme (figures are for December 2007: DWP, 2008). The principles for establishing who is liable for child

⁷ All references to IS should be read to include income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

maintenance are essentially the same for the old and new schemes alike (e.g. who is defined as a 'NRP'). However, there are fundamental differences between the formulas for assessing the amount of child maintenance payable under the old and new schemes respectively.

The old scheme formula, based on social security benefit rates, is highly complex. It takes into account both parents' incomes, takes little account of the existence of second families and provides no disregard⁸ for PWCs on IS. However, an NRP's liability for child support under the old scheme is reduced if the children stay over for at least 104 nights a year.

The new scheme formula is much simpler: Maintenance is calculated as a straightforward percentage of the NRP's income (15 per cent of net income for one child, 20 per cent for two and 25 per cent for three or more, with reduced liabilities for NRPs who earn less than £200 a week or are on benefit). The PWC's income is ignored in new scheme calculations. The new formula makes an allowance at the outset for any children the NRP may have in a second family (whether they are genetic children or stepchildren). PWCs who receive IS qualify for a disregard of up to £10 a week (known as the 'child maintenance premium') on any child support that is paid. There is a lower threshold for contact before it affects the calculation: a NRP's liability for child support under the new scheme is reduced if the children stay over for at least 52 (not 104) nights a year.

The new scheme has seen some success in that it has a much higher proportion of positive calculations (71 per cent) than the old scheme (46 per cent). Conversely, the old scheme has a much larger proportion of nil assessments (48 per cent) than the new scheme (13 per cent). However, compliance rates are actually rather lower under the new scheme than its predecessor. The result is that the CSA has an accumulated debt of £3.7 billion (£2.2bn old scheme, £1.5bn new scheme), much of which is officially described as 'probably uncollectable' (DWP, 2008).

In February 2006, the Government decided that a fundamental overhaul of the system was required to address the structural problems faced by the CSA. Sir David Henshaw was appointed to lead the redesign team and to explore the most effective arrangements for an efficient child maintenance system. The Henshaw Report, published in July 2006 (DWP 2006a), recommended that the CSA should be closed down and replaced by a fresh organisation responsible for a radically redesigned new child maintenance system, built to further the Government's target of eradicating child poverty within a generation. The principal recommendations in the Henshaw Report included:

- encouraging a greater degree of personal responsibility by allowing all separated parents (including PWCs on IS) to make their own child maintenance arrangements wherever possible, whilst offering an effective State system for cases where private agreements cannot be reached;

⁸ A 'disregard' is the amount of income (e.g. in child maintenance) that a claimant can keep before it affects their benefit entitlement.

- allowing PWCs on IS to keep a greater proportion of their child maintenance payments by significantly increasing the £10 a week disregard figure;
- introducing new, tougher enforcement powers to deal with NRPs who fail to take financial responsibility for their children.

The Government quickly indicated its acceptance of the main thrust of the Henshaw Report's recommendations (DWP 2006b). In December 2006, the Government published further details of its plans for redesigning the child support system (DWP 2006c). At the time of writing, the Government's proposals were going through Parliament in the form of the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Bill 2008. The reforms enshrined in the Bill fall into four broad areas:

First, the CSA is to be replaced by a new non-departmental public body, the C-MEC, which will have as its main objective *'to maximise the number of those children who live apart from one or both of their parents for whom effective maintenance arrangements are in place'*. Its subsidiary objectives will be to *'encourage and support the making and keeping by parents of appropriate voluntary maintenance arrangements for their children'* and also *'to support the making of child support maintenance applications under the statutory machinery in the (further) amended 1991 Act'* and *'to secure compliance when appropriate with parental obligations under that Act'*.

Secondly, parents will be encouraged to make their own arrangements for child maintenance. The 2008 Bill requires C-MEC to *'take such steps as it thinks appropriate for the purpose of raising awareness among parents of the importance of (a) taking responsibility for the maintenance of their children, and (b) making appropriate arrangements for the maintenance of children of theirs who live apart from them.'* In keeping with this objective of encouraging personal responsibility on the part of separated parents, the current obligation on PWCs in receipt of IS to apply for child support is to be abolished.

Thirdly, the 2008 Bill includes measures designed to simplify and improve the child maintenance assessment process. At present, in new scheme cases, the CSA uses the NRP's current weekly net income to calculate child maintenance awards. In future, C-MEC will use the NRP's gross weekly income from the last available tax year. C-MEC will also be able to obtain this information direct from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC), rather than relying on the NRP to provide the relevant information. The percentage rates will be changed from 15/20/25 per cent to 12/16/19 per cent for one, two or three children, to reflect the change from net to gross income (but the rates will be 9/12/15 per cent on the balance of incomes over £800 per week). In order to provide greater certainty for parents and to minimise operational problems for C-MEC, child maintenance awards will be fixed for a year at a time under the new arrangements and only subject to in-year review in exceptional circumstances.

Fourthly, C-MEC will have access to a wider range of collection and enforcement measures than has been available to the CSA to date. The DWP is planning a pilot

exercise involving greater use of deduction from earnings orders to collect child maintenance from NRPs. The 2008 Bill also includes a range of new enforcement measures and sanctions to deal with those NRPs who repeatedly fail to comply with their obligations. These include current account deduction orders and disqualification from holding travel authorisation documents (passports and ID cards). The process for obtaining liability orders will be streamlined and C-MEC given the power to apply to courts to impose a curfew in cases of persistent non-compliance.

The 2008 Bill does not include all the Government's proposed reforms, as some measures do not need primary legislation. The most important element of the child maintenance redesign package, which does not appear in the Bill, is the extension of the maintenance disregard for PWCs on IS (or income-based JSA). As explained above, this currently stands at a maximum of £10 a week for new scheme cases. The Government has announced that by the end of 2008 this will be increased to £20 a week and also extended to old scheme cases. It will then rise to £40 a week by April 2010. These changes (which will also include a full disregard for Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB)) will be made by way of amending regulations.

1.2 Aims of the study

The study had three parallel aims: The first was to gather the views of separated parents – both those who had used the CSA and those who had not – on the Government's plans for the redesign of the child support system. More specifically, the research aimed to find out about:

- parents' attitudes towards the principle of child maintenance and the role of NRPs;
- parents' views on the balance between Government involvement in child support and parents independently making their own arrangements;
- parents' views on key policy reforms such as using gross income to calculate maintenance, obtaining income details of NRPs from HMRC and the introduction of new enforcement measures.

The second main aim was to investigate how separated parents thought they may respond to the changes brought in as part of the redesign of the child support system. Specifically, parents were asked about:

- their confidence in, and likelihood of, making a private arrangement;
- the likelihood of their using C-MEC to work out their maintenance level or for collection of maintenance;
- their future information and support needs in relation to child maintenance;
- how they might react if changes were brought in to the level of disregard or in relation to maintenance debt.

The third aim was to make sense of these views and possible responses by looking at them in relation to family characteristics, contact arrangements and financial situations.

1.3 Research design and rationale

This section outlines the design of the survey and the methodology used.

1.3.1 Sampling

The sample was made up of four distinct groups:

- NRPs who had not used the CSA (non-CSA NRPs);
- PWCs who had not used the CSA (non-CSA PWCs);
- NRPs who had used the CSA (CSA NRPs);
- PWCs who had used the CSA (CSA PWCs).

The sampling for each of these groups is described below.

Non-CSA NRPs

The sample for this group was drawn from the Family Resources Survey (FRS). In order to obtain enough cases who fitted the criteria listed below, based on our estimated screening-in and response rates, the sample was taken from respondents who took part in FRS between 2004 and 2006. A total of 14,826 respondents from those years of the FRS were selected based on the following criteria:

- that they were male (approximately 93 per cent of NRPs on the CSA database are male);
- that they were aged between 18 and 55 (96 per cent of NRPs on the CSA database are aged between 18 and 55);
- that they gave permission in the FRS interview that they could be recontacted.

Screening of non-CSA NRPs

The men identified from the FRS were contacted and asked to take part in a short telephone screen. The telephone screen established their eligibility for the survey and found out if they:

- were a separated parent;
- had at least one child under the age of 15, or aged 16 to 19 who was in full-time education, who did not live with them;
- had ever used the CSA in the past. Parents who had once been clients of the CSA but were not at the time of the screening were not included.

The screening took place prior to the face-to-face interviews, during spring 2006, and identified 361 parents who were eligible and gave permission to be contacted again.

Non-CSA PWCs

A random sample of 7,569 parents in 150 geographical areas was drawn from Child Benefit records. Any parents who appeared on the CSA database were first removed from this sample. This sample was screened to identify PWCs.

Screening of non-CSA PWCs

The screening of the non-CSA PWCs was carried out over the phone where telephone numbers were available, where they were not available it was carried out on the doorstep by interviewers. In order to establish the parents' eligibility for the survey they were asked if they:

- were a separated parent (all Child Benefit claimants are parents);
- had at least one child under the age of 15, or aged 16 to 19 who was in full-time education, who lived with them;
- had ever used the CSA in the past. As with the non-CSA NRPs, PWCs who had once been clients of the CSA but who were not at the time of the screening, were not included.

The screening identified 953 parents who were eligible and gave permission to be contacted again.

CSA NRPs and PWCs

A random sample of 1,681 NRPs and 1,109 PWCs from 150 geographical areas were drawn from the CSA's database. The following parents were treated as ineligible for inclusion in the sample:

- those who shared a case number with another selected parent, hence, the 'matched pair' approach was actively avoided;
- those whose first CSA assessment took place before 2001;
- those who were 'nil-assessed' (i.e. no maintenance was to be paid);
- those who had no qualifying children;
- those whose youngest child was over 20 years old;
- those classified as 'closed cases';
- those belonging to 'sensitive' or potentially violent cases;
- those with no residential address;
- those who had been interviewed in the CSA Maintenance Direct survey or qualitative work (Bell *et al.*, 2007 and 2006).

No screening was necessary for this group of parents, however, their eligibility for the survey was checked on the doorstep in case their situation had changed since the sample was drawn.

It is important to recognise the composition of the sample of separated parents and in particular to remember that our:

- CSA parents include only those assessed since 2001 and thus, reflect the views and experiences of more recent clients;
- non-CSA parents are more accurately 'never CSA' parents, as all parents with previous or current experience of the CSA were screened out of the interview process.

1.3.2 Conducting the survey

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with named respondents, usually at their homes. Before interviewers contacted parents, they were sent a letter explaining the survey and allowing them to opt-out by calling a freephone number. Every interviewer attended a face-to-face briefing before beginning work on the survey, which emphasised the need for discretion given the potentially sensitive subject matter. Interviews lasted for 50 minutes on average.

1.3.3 Response rates

The final numbers of achieved interviews per group were as follows:

- non-CSA NRPs: 189;
- non-CSA PWCs: 656;
- CSA NRPs: 479;
- CSA PWCs: 632.

The sample size for the non-CSA NRPs is considerably smaller than the other groups of parents, due to a lower than expected screening-in rate for the telephone screen. In addition, the non-CSA NRPs tended to have higher incomes and lower levels of poverty than might be expected (see Section 2.10 for a description of the demographic profile of this group) and, as such, are not representative of the non-CSA NRP population as a whole. Consequently, the responses from this group are reported separately from the other three sample groups and comparisons between the non-CSA NRPs and the other groups of parents are not made. The result is disappointing from a methodological perspective, given that this approach was felt to be the best of a limited number of options for obtaining a representative sample of non-CSA NRPs. It is not only important to bear this in mind when reading this report but also when planning future research with this group of separated parents.

1.3.4 Notes about the data

Despite intensive testing of the questionnaire program prior to fieldwork starting and data checks on initial data once the fieldwork had started, the complexity of the program led to some errors arising for a small (random) proportion of the interviews. Due to these errors there are some tables where the bases are lower than expected, where data has been removed as it was not possible to ensure that the questions were asked exactly as intended. The sample group most affected was the non-CSA PWCs, where the number of achieved interviews is the highest, hence the impact on data quality is minimal.

For some analyses in Chapter 2, significant differences were observed between corresponding estimates for the CSA PWCs and NRPs that one would have expected to have had the same value: for example, 39 per cent of PWCs reported that they were living with a married partner compared with 49 per cent of NRPs. Differences were also found between PWCs and NRPs for: number of children, age of the oldest and youngest eligible child and the length of their relationship prior to separating.

Some (small) differences would be expected in the estimates for NRPs and PWCs simply by chance, as both estimates would be subject to sampling error. However, the magnitude of these differences suggests that the profile of PWCs who agreed to take part in the survey was systematically different to the profile of participating NRPs. In order to assess whether this differential non-response had any impact on the survey estimates, a number of measures for which a difference had been observed were examined:

- friendliness of the current relationship between the respondent and their ex-partner;
- whether any maintenance is paid or received;
- whether maintenance payments are regular or not;
- ease of discussion about financial arrangements between the respondent and their ex-partner;
- whether NRPs provide informal support;
- frequency of NRPs' contact with children.

This was done by fitting a logistic regression model for each measure, including whether the respondent was a PWC or NRP. A second set of models was then fitted that also included: marital/cohabiting status prior to separation; number of eligible children; age of the oldest and youngest eligible child; and the length of their relationship prior to separating. It was found that adding these terms to the models had no influence on the reported differences between the survey measures looked at and therefore, that the differential non-response does not impact on the conclusions of this report.

1.3.5 Interpreting results in the report

The bases in this report contain the total number of cases in the whole sample or in the particular sub-group being analysed and the bases for different columns (e.g. non-CSA PWCs or CSA NRPs). Weighted and unweighted bases are given. The total base figure excludes any respondent who said 'don't know' or refused to answer the question, unless 'don't know' or 'refusal' appears as a specific answer category. Thus, while base descriptions may be the same across a number of tables (e.g. all non-CSA PWCs) the number bases may differ slightly due to the exclusion of varying numbers of 'don't knows' or refusals at different questions. Due to rounding, percentage figures may not add up to exactly 100 per cent.

Some samples in this report are relatively small, so it is particularly important to note unweighted base size when drawing comparisons. Any findings reported in the text have been tested for statistical significance, and are significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.

The symbols below have been used in tables and denote the following:

[] to indicate a percentage based on fewer than 50 respondents;

* to indicate a percentage of less than 0.5 per cent;

0 to indicate a percentage value of zero.

1.4 Structure of the report

In addition to this introduction, the report comprises seven substantive chapters, and a conclusions chapter. In order to understand the behaviour and attitudes of the separated parents described in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 of this report, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 describe their socio-demographic profile, their previous relationships, the level and type of contact between members of the separated families and their financial arrangements.

Chapter 2 examines the demographic profile of parents and the relationship with their ex-partner. Comparisons are made between the CSA and non-CSA groups in order to identify which of the CSA clients might behave more like, and need the same types of support as, the non-CSA clients under the new arrangements, and which might have different requirements. Characteristics such as the number and age of the children, working and socio-economic status, income, levels of poverty, ethnicity and disability are discussed, as well as key characteristics relating to their family situation and relationship history such as marital status prior to separation, length of relationship with their ex-partner, reasons for separation, quality of relationship at the point of separation and now and re-partnering.

For many parents, child maintenance and contact between the NRP and children are strongly linked, so Chapter 3 looks at these contact arrangements and also the contact between the separated parents. It examines the frequency and type of contact, the reasons for contact, the decision-making role of both parents in their

children's lives and the extent of shared care. It also reports on how parents feel about the level of contact they or their ex-partners have with their children.

Chapter 4 looks at the financial arrangements in place between separated parents. It focuses on different types of arrangements: through the CSA, courts or privately, and also looks at situations where there are no arrangements in place. The levels and methods of maintenance are discussed, as are separated parents' perceptions of the fairness and affordability of maintenance. Issues around compliance are also examined.

Chapter 5 introduces a typology of separated families which was developed using Latent Class Analysis. This typology brings together many of the characteristics of the parents in terms of their contact and financial arrangements and their relationships with their ex-partners and classifies them into five 'types'. These types are used in the subsequent chapters to examine how parents' attitudes and views relate to these important characteristics. The second half of Chapter 5 reports on the attitudes of parents towards child support and the role of NRPs.

One of the key policy reforms in the redesign of the child support system is the introduction of improved information services, with the aim of providing sufficient support to enable parents to make their own child maintenance arrangements. With this in mind, Chapter 6 examines the information and support that parents have used in the past when making child maintenance arrangements and what they think their needs may be in the future.

Chapter 7 then focuses on parents' views of private arrangements. It looks at what they think about the balance between the role of Government agencies and the role of separated parents in making maintenance arrangements. It then turns to how confident parents would be to make their own arrangements and the likelihood of their doing this if they were given access to particular support services.

Chapter 8 explores the attitudes and likely responses of separated parents to various plans for the redesign of the child support system. These include their views on: the likelihood of their using C-MEC; the effects of changes in child maintenance arrangements on benefit claimants; the use of gross rather than net income in calculating maintenance; the automatic transfer of income data from HMRC to C-MEC; and the appropriateness of various enforcement measures. In this chapter we also report on parents' attitudes towards joint birth registration, an area where the Government has brought forward proposals for reform alongside the changes to the child maintenance system.

2 The demographic profile of separated parents

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the demographic profile of separated parents. Comparisons between the Child Support Agency (CSA) and non-CSA groups are important in order to understand their behaviour and attitudes in the subsequent chapters of this report. In addition, highlighting the differences between those who are currently CSA clients and those who are not will help to identify which of the CSA clients might behave more like, and need the same types of support as, the non-CSA clients under the new arrangements and which might have different requirements.

Differences would be expected between the CSA and non-CSA groups, although they share the common feature of being separated parents. This is because of the composition of the CSA population. Under the present arrangements, nearly all applicants to the CSA are parents with care (PWCs) and these can be seen as either those who are obliged to involve the CSA or those who apply voluntarily. Those who are 'obliged' include PWCs who have to apply to the CSA because they are claiming Income Support (IS) (or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)). These are the so-called 'benefit cases' and constitute over one-third of CSA PWCs⁹. The 'volunteers' are PWCs who are not on benefit but either cannot reach an agreement with their ex-partners or prefer to have the CSA acting as an intermediary. These are the so-called 'private' or 'non-benefit cases'. Many of these volunteers are likely to have especially difficult relationships with their ex-partners. The characteristics of both groups are, therefore, likely to differ in key respects from those of the general population of separated parents.

⁹ In May 2007, in 24 per cent of CSA cases the PWC was on benefits and in 13 per cent of cases both the parent with case and **non-resident parent (NRP)** were on benefits. http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/child_support/csa_quarterly_dec07.asp

2.1.1 Plan of chapter

This chapter covers:

- the number and age of the children in the separated families;
- what the separated parents' marital status was prior to breaking up, how long they were together, why they broke up and what their relationships were like at the point of breaking up;
- whether or not the separated parents – or their ex-partners – now have new partners;
- what the separated parents' relationships are now like with their ex-partners;
- whether they are working, their socio-economic status, their income levels and sources and their housing tenure;
- the extent to which they are living in poverty or deprived circumstances;
- their ethnicity;
- whether the separated parents had a long-standing illness or disability.

Sections 2.2 to 2.9 deal solely with the three main sample groups: non-CSA PWCs, CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs. For the reasons outlined in Section 1.3.3, the data relating to the smaller sample of non-CSA NRPs is reported on separately in Section 2.10.

2.2 Children: numbers and ages

The interview with the separated parents focused on their relationships with a particular ex-partner and the children they had with that ex-partner¹⁰. So, the children who were asked about were those who met **all** of the following criteria:

For PWCs

Children aged under 16 or aged 16 to 19 and in full-time education who were:

- resident in the household at least half the time;
- children of the PWC and their ex-partner;
- biologically related to the PWC or adopted (but not fostered).

¹⁰ CSA parents were selected on the basis of their CSA case. Therefore, if the parent had more than one ex-partner, they were only asked about the one relevant to the selected CSA case. Where a non-CSA PWC had children with more than one ex-partner, one was randomly selected for the focus of the interview.

For NRPs:

Children aged under 16 or aged 16 to 19 in full-time education who were:

- not resident in the household but living with their ex-partner at least half the time;
- children of the NRP and their ex-partner;
- biologically related to the NRP or adopted (but not fostered).

2.2.1 Number of children

Table 2.1 shows how many children the separated parents had with their ex-partners based on the eligibility criteria above. In around two-thirds of instances, there was only one child involved and in only a minority of cases (less than one in ten) were there three or more children. This was the same across all the parent groups. The only notable difference was that, among CSA PWCs, benefit cases were more likely to be larger (i.e. have three or more children) than non-benefit cases.

Table 2.1 Number of children involved, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
1	65	67	62	68	66	60	64
2	29	26	29	26	26	28	29
3+	6	8	9	6	9	13	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	649	459	627	202	257	257	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	649	457	629	167	290	234	395

Base: All parents.

2.2.2 Ages of the children

Turning to the ages of these children, Table 2.2 shows the average (mean) age for the youngest and oldest children within each family, as well as the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles¹¹. There were clear differences between the children in the

¹¹ A percentile is a value on a scale that indicates the proportion of a distribution that is equal to it or below it. So, the value at the 25th percentile is equal to or greater than 25 per cent of the total values, e.g. for non-CSA PWCs, in 25 per cent of cases the age of the youngest child is five or under and over five for 75 per cent of cases.

CSA benefit groups¹² and the CSA non-benefit and non-CSA groups. The children of CSA benefit PWCs were, on average, younger than those of other PWCs. For instance, the average age of the youngest child of CSA benefit PWCs was five years old, compared to eight years old among the CSA non-benefit PWCs and nine years old among the non-CSA PWCs.

Table 2.2 Age of children, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Youngest child							
Mean	9	8	7	7	9	5	8
25 th percentile	5	5	3	3	6	2	5
50 th percentile	9	8	6	6	9	4	8
75 th percentile	13	12	10	10	13	8	11
Oldest child							
Mean	10	9	8	8	11	7	9
25 th percentile	6	5	4	4	7	3	6
50 th percentile	11	9	8	6	11	6	9
75 th percentile	15	14	12	12	15	10	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	649	459	627	202	257	257	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	649	457	629	167	290	234	395

Base: All parents.

2.3 Relationship prior to break-up

2.3.1 Length of relationship

Within Table 2.3 are the lengths of the separated parents’ relationships prior to their break-ups. Non-CSA PWCs were twice as likely as CSA parents to report that they had never been in relationships with their ex-partners (11 per cent compared to five per cent). However, non-CSA PWCs who had been in relationships had had longer relationships, on average, than CSA parents. Non-CSA PWCs reported that their relationships had lasted nine years on average, compared to seven years for CSA PWCs. However, this difference seems to be driven by the shorter relationships observed between CSA PWCs on benefit compared to those not on benefit. For, whilst CSA PWCs who were on benefit had relationships which lasted for five

¹² Because of the slight differences in the sample composition of the two CSA groups, the children’s demographics are compared according to the reports of the CSA PWCs rather than the NRPs.

years on average, the relationships of CSA PWCs who were not on benefit lasted for eight years on average, which is comparable to non-CSA PWCs.

Table 2.3 Length of relationship with ex-partner, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Never in a relationship	11	5	5	6	4	4	6
< 2 years	12	8	16	9	7	20	13
2 < 5 years	16	27	27	35	21	32	23
5 < 10 years	22	25	23	26	25	25	22
10 < 15 years	20	20	16	17	22	13	18
> 15 years	19	15	13	7	20	5	18
Mean ¹	9	8	7	7	9	5	8
Median	8	7	5	5	9	4	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	568	431	583	189	241	234	349
<i>Unweighted base</i>	568	428	588	157	271	214	374

Base: All parents.

¹ Base for the mean and median excludes those never in a relationship.

2.3.2 Marital status¹³

Prior to break up, around three-quarters of parents had been living with their ex-partners. However, non-CSA PWCs and CSA PWCs who were not on benefits were more likely than CSA PWCs on benefits to have been married to their ex-partners (47 and 45 per cent compared to 30 per cent). CSA PWCs on benefits were more likely to have been cohabiting.

¹³ Again, for the reasons outlined in Section 1.3.4, the reports of the CSA PWCs are focused on rather than those of the CSA NRPs, and comparisons made between them and the non-CSA PWCs.

Table 2.4 Marital/cohabitant status prior to break-up¹⁴, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Married couple, living together	47	49	39	37	58	30	45
Unmarried couple, living together	28	37	36	46	31	38	35
Unmarried couple, not living together	14	8	18	10	6	26	12
Not a couple	10	5	5	5	4	4	5
Still a couple but not living together	1	1	2	1	*	2	2
Married couple, not living together	*	*	*	0	*	*	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	614	468	627	204	264	257	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	614	467	629	169	298	234	395

Base: All parents.

2.3.3 Reasons for break-up

The reasons why couples break up can potentially have an enduring impact on the nature of relationships between separated couples and – in turn – on their contact and maintenance arrangements. Table 2.5 presents the reasons why separated parents (who had previously lived with their ex-partners) said they had split up, comparing the three parent groups and the differences between CSA PWCs who were and were not on benefits¹⁵. In the bottom half of Table 2.5, the reasons for break-up have been grouped together based upon whether they relate to: the respondent, the ex-partner, the quality of their relationship or other reasons (of course, parents’ responses can fall into more than one group, thus they add up to more than 100 per cent).

Across all three groups, the most common reasons given for the relationship ending were: that the respondent and their partner had grown apart, that the ex-partner had been seeing someone else and that the parents argued all the time.

¹⁴ The base is lower than elsewhere because of a programme error discussed in Section 1.3.4.

¹⁵ There were few differences between CSA NRPs who were and were not on benefits, hence their exclusion from Table 2.5.

Comparing CSA NRPs to CSA PWCs shows that CSA PWCs were more likely to report reasons of 'fault' (on either side, but primarily of their ex-partners – 60 per cent compared to 46 per cent and 51 per cent), whilst CSA NRPs were more likely to say that they had simply 'grown apart'. These differences may be partly to do with differences in the sample composition (see Section 1.3.4). However, they are large enough to imply that there are real differences in how the NRPs and the PWCs chose to report why they broke up.

In more detail, CSA PWCs were more likely than CSA NRPs to say that their relationship had ended because: their ex-partners were violent towards them (24 per cent compared to ten per cent), their ex-partners had had alcohol or drug problems (16 per cent compared to four per cent), their ex-partners had financial or money problems (eight per cent compared to three per cent), they themselves had emotional problems or depression (12 per cent compared to five per cent) or because they, the PWCs, were pregnant (eight per cent compared with less than one half per cent). In contrast CSA NRPs were more likely to report that they and their partners had grown apart (44 per cent compared to 34 per cent) or that they themselves had financial or money problems (eight per cent compared to five per cent). The greater tendency for CSA NRPs to explain the breakdown of their relationships in terms of growing apart confirms the finding in the Baseline Survey 2001 (Wikeley *et al.*, 2001: 39).

The reasons given by non-CSA PWCs were similar to those of the CSA PWCs. The noticeable differences between these groups of PWCs were that CSA parents were more likely than the non-CSA parents to say that their relationships had ended because of their ex-partners' violence (24 per cent compared to 18 per cent) or because they argued all the time (36 per cent compared to 24 per cent).

CSA PWCs who were not on benefit were similar in several respects to the non-CSA PWCs. For instance, non-benefit CSA PWCs were more likely to report that their relationship had ended because: they and their partners had grown apart (39 per cent compared to 26 per cent of benefit cases and 39 per cent of non-CSA PWCs) or because their ex-partners were violent towards their children (six per cent, compared to one per cent and three per cent). In contrast, CSA PWCs on benefits were more likely to report that their relationship had ended because: their ex-partners had had alcohol or drug problems (20 per cent compared to 13 per cent of non-benefit cases and 12 per cent of non-CSA PWCs) or because they themselves had emotional problems or depression (15 per cent compared with nine per cent of the other two groups).

Table 2.5 Reasons for break-up, by PWC and NRP status¹⁶

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
They had grown apart	39	44	34	26	39
Ex-partner was seeing someone else	27	27	31	28	32
They argued all the time	24	33	36	38	34
Ex-partner was violent towards respondent	18	10	24	25	23
Ex-partner had alcohol and/or drug problems	12	4	16	20	13
Respondent had emotional problems/depression	9	5	12	15	9
Ex-partner had emotional problems/depression	8	11	11	10	12
Respondent was pregnant	6	*	8	9	8
Ex-partner had financial or money problems	6	3	8	7	8
They were never committed to each other	5	9	7	8	6
Respondent had financial or money problems	4	8	5	5	5
Respondent was seeing someone else	4	7	2	1	2
Ex-partner was violent towards their child(ren)	3	3	4	1	6
Respondent had alcohol and/ or drug problems	2	3	2	2	1
General relationship breakdown	2	2	1	3	*
Relationship related	57	66	59	59	59
Ex-partner related	51	46	60	55	63
Respondent related	23	21	23	25	22
Other	11	11	8	8	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>520</i>	<i>432</i>	<i>571</i>	<i>235</i>	<i>336</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>520</i>	<i>435</i>	<i>577</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>361</i>

Base: All parents who had lived with their partners.

¹⁶ Only reasons reported by two per cent of people or more are presented.

2.3.4 Friendliness of relationship

The next aspect of separated parents' prior relationships explored is the friendliness of their relationship at the point of break-up, in terms of whether their relationship was 'very or quite friendly', 'neither friendly nor unfriendly' or 'not very or not at all friendly'. CSA PWCs were more likely to have rated their relationships at the point of break-up as 'not very or not at all friendly' than either CSA NRPs or non-CSA PWCs (68 per cent compared with 61 per cent and 48 per cent respectively).

The difference between the CSA PWCs and their non-CSA counterparts is to be expected, given that many parents do not resort to going to the CSA unless their relationship is bad enough that they cannot resolve issues of maintenance between themselves. Therefore, looking at the CSA PWCs who were or were not on benefit, it is somewhat surprising that no significant differences were found between them (the difference in the table is non-significant). There was a difference in the reporting of CSA NRPs, with non-benefit cases being significantly more likely to have rated their relationships at the point of break-up as 'not very or not at all friendly' than benefit cases.

Table 2.6 Friendliness of relationship at point of break-up, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Very or quite friendly	27	18	14	26	12	17	13
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	25	21	17	23	20	20	16
Not very or not at all friendly	48	61	68	51	68	63	71
<i>Weighted base</i>	544	439	584	188	251	241	343
<i>Unweighted base</i>	544	442	590	156	286	221	369

Base: All parents.

2.4 Re-partnering

This section looks at whether the separated parents had re-partnered. Table 2.7 shows the proportions of those who had got new partners themselves and Table 2.8 shows the proportions whose ex-partners had new partners. The presence of new partners – on either side – is known to affect both the attitudes and behaviour of separated parents towards contact and maintenance arrangements (Maclean and Eekelaar (1997: Chapters 5, 6 and 8); Wikeley *et al.*, (2001: 108)).

Since benefit cases within CSA PWCs are almost exclusively a lone parent group (only three per cent reporting that they had re-partnered) it would be misleading to compare each CSA group as a whole. So, looking instead at only non-benefit cases within CSA PWCs and NRPs, Table 2.7 shows that NRPs are substantially more likely to have re-partnered than PWCs (44 per cent compared to 29 per cent). Non-CSA PWCs were even less likely to have re-partnered, with only 19 per cent having done so compared to 29 per cent of CSA PWCs who were not on benefit.

Table 2.7 Whether respondent has a current partner in the household, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Yes	19	39	18	33	44	3	29
No	81	61	82	67	56	97	71
<i>Weighted base</i>	655	480	629	210	270	257	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	655	479	631	174	305	234	397

Base: All parents.

The separated parents were also asked whether or not their ex-partners had re-partnered. Due to the varying quality of relationships between separated parents, in many instances this information was unknown. For that reason, 'don't know' is included as a valid response in Table 2.8.

Half of the CSA parents (both NRPs and PWCs) said that their ex-partners had re-partnered. However, re-partnering was less common among the ex-partners of non-CSA PWCs (40 per cent compared to 50 per cent of CSA PWCs).

Among CSA clients, again there were differences between benefit and non-benefit cases for both NRPs and PWCs. In both instances, the ex-partners of non-benefit cases were more likely to have re-partnered than the ex-partners of benefit cases.

Table 2.8 Whether ex-partner has re-partnered¹⁷

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Yes	40	50	50	38	58	39	58
No	27	21	22	30	14	28	19
Don't know	33	28	27	30	27	33	23
In a relationship with the respondent	*	1	1	2	1	1	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	614	467	625	204	264	256	368
<i>Unweighted base</i>	614	466	627	169	297	233	394

Base: All parents.

2.5 Employment and socio-economic status

Table 2.9 shows the proportions of separated parents who were in paid work. CSA NRPs were more likely than CSA PWCs to be in paid work (79 per cent compared to 51 per cent). This difference is driven by the varying circumstances of CSA PWCs who are on benefits compared to those who are not. For whilst 82 percent of non-benefit cases were in work, this was the case for only five percent of benefit cases¹⁸. However, irrespective of the difference between benefit and non-benefit cases, CSA NRPs were substantially more likely to be in full-time work (72 per cent compared to 23 per cent of CSA PWCs)¹⁹.

In turn, non-CSA PWCs were more likely than CSA PWCs to be in paid work (66 per cent compared to 51 per cent), which can be almost entirely accounted for by an increased likelihood of being in full-time work.

Within CSA NRPs, the non-benefit cases were more likely to work full-time, whilst for CSA PWCs, the non-benefit cases were more likely to work part-time (16 hours per week or more) and full-time.

¹⁷ The base is lower than elsewhere because of a programme error as discussed in Section 1.3.4.

¹⁸ Note that it is possible for respondents to claim IS and be in work, provided that they work under 16 hours per week.

¹⁹ Note that the proportions of NRPs in work are higher than suggested by the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics (53 per of NRPs were in employment in December 2007, http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/child_support/dec2007/csa_dec07_tables.xls). This may be because of the skew in our sample discussed in Section 1.3.4.

Table 2.9 Whether respondent is working, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Not working	34	21	49	28	15	95	18
Working part-time							
(1-15 hours per week)	3	1	5	*	1	5	4
(16-29 hours per week)	25	6	23	8	4	0	38
Working full-time							
(30+ hours per week)	38	72	23	63	80	0	40
<i>Weighted base</i>	655	480	629	210	270	257	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	655	479	631	174	305	234	397

Base: All parents.

Turning to the relationship with re-partnering, Table 2.10 clearly shows that for both CSA and non-CSA PWCs, re-partnering was associated with a greater likelihood of working. Consideration of the number of hours worked demonstrates that non-CSA PWCs who had re-partnered were more likely to work full-time (53 per cent compared to 35 per cent) but were slightly less likely to work a high number of part-time hours (19 per cent compared to 26 per cent). Then, taking CSA PWCs, again, parents who had re-partnered were more likely to work full-time (31 per cent compared to 22 per cent) and they were also more likely to work a low number of part-time hours (nine per cent compared to four per cent).

Table 2.10 Whether respondent is working, by whether they have re-partnered

	Non-CSA PWCs		CSA PWCs	
	Single %	Re- partnered %	Single %	Re- partnered %
Not working	36	23	52	37
Working part-time (1-15 hours per week)	3	5	4	9
Working part-time (16-29 hours per week)	26	19	23	23
Working full-time (30+ hours per week)	35	53	22	31
<i>Weighted base</i>	531	124	513	116
<i>Unweighted base</i>	531	124	505	126

Base: All parents.

Using the information that separated parents gave us about their paid work and that of any current partner, families' socio-economic status was derived (Table 2.11) (in couple households this is defined as that which comes highest in the list shown in the table). This is a useful way of highlighting the relative disadvantage of the CSA PWCs, compared to their NRP and non-CSA PWC counterparts.

Looking first at the CSA clients, at the upper end of the scale (managerial or professional occupations), the proportions of CSA NRPs and CSA PWCs falling into these groups did not differ significantly. However, CSA NRPs were more likely than CSA PWCs to be in the middle-ranking (skilled or semi-skilled) occupations, whilst CSA PWCs were, in turn, more likely than CSA NRPs to belong to a semi-routine or routine occupation.

On average, non-CSA PWCs fell more often into the managerial and professional group than CSA PWCs (35 per cent compared to 27 per cent). Conversely, CSA PWCs were more likely than their non-CSA counterparts to belong to a semi-routine or routine occupation (46 per cent compared to 35 per cent).

The same is true for benefit and non-benefit cases for both CSA NRPs and PWCs, i.e. non-benefit cases were more likely to belong to a higher or lower managerial and professional occupation and less likely to belong to a semi-routine or routine occupation.

Table 2.11 Household socio-economic status, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Higher/lower managerial and professional occupations	35	30	27	22	36	15	33
Intermediate occupations	16	11	15	8	12	12	17
Small employers and own account workers	6	10	5	13	8	2	7
Lower supervisory and technical operative	8	19	7	21	18	7	7
Semi-routine/routine occupations	35	30	46	35	25	64	36
<i>Weighted base</i>	576	455	554	195	260	192	362
<i>Unweighted base</i>	576	455	558	161	294	172	386

Base: All working households.

As with re-partnering, whilst all separated parents were asked whether or not they knew about their ex-partners' work status, due to the varying quality of relationships between separated parents, in many instances this information was unknown. As such, 'don't know' is included as a valid response in Table 2.12.

CSA PWCs were more likely than CSA NRPs and non-CSA PWCs to know about their ex-partners' work status, with three in ten (30 per cent) saying they did not know compared to around four in ten of CSA NRPs and non-CSA PWCs (41 per cent and 38 per cent respectively). CSA PWCs were also significantly more likely to report that their ex-partners were in employment than either CSA NRPs or non-CSA PWCs (61 per cent compared to 39 per cent and 53 per cent respectively)²⁰.

For benefit and non-benefit cases the pattern of results is again similar for both NRPs and PWCs. In both instances, benefit and non-benefit cases were equally knowledgeable about their ex-partners' work status and non-benefit parents were more likely to report that their ex-partners were in work.

Table 2.12 Whether ex-partner is working, by PWC and NRP status²¹

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Working	53	39	61	29	47	50	69
Not working	8	20	10	30	13	17	4
Don't know	38	41	30	41	40	33	27
<i>Weighted base</i>	616	468	627	204	264	257	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	616	467	629	169	298	234	395

Base: All parents.

²⁰ A significant difference remains even if parents who did not know about their ex-partners' work status were excluded from the base (86 per cent of the ex-partners of CSA PWCs were in work compared to 66 per cent for CSA NRPs). However, there was no significant difference between the proportion of CSA and non-CSA PWCs whose ex-partners were in work (both 86 per cent).

²¹ The base is lower than elsewhere because of a programme error as discussed in Section 1.3.4.

2.6 Income

2.6.1 Sources of income

Separated parents were asked about their household's sources of income (Table 2.13). Many of the differences in income sources between the parent groups reflect our findings in the preceding sections. For instance, Table 2.9 showed that CSA NRPs were more likely to be working than CSA PWCs and therefore, it is not surprising when comparing CSA parents in Table 2.13 that NRPs were more likely to receive earnings from employment or self-employment than PWCs. Likewise, given that, by definition, 'PWCs' have children in the household whilst NRPs may not, it is unsurprising to see that CSA PWCs are more likely than CSA NRPs to receive income from child maintenance, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit (CTC). However, other differences include a greater likelihood that CSA PWCs receive means-tested benefits such as Housing Benefit (HB), Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and IS than CSA NRPs, whilst CSA NRPs are more likely to receive JSA²².

Comparing CSA PWCs and their non-CSA counterparts, their profiles of income sources are reasonably similar. However, non-CSA PWCs were more likely to receive earnings from employment, whilst CSA PWCs were more likely to receive child maintenance (see Chapter 4 for more information on this), CTC, HB or CTB and IS. The latter reflects the current requirement that PWCs on IS become CSA clients²³.

As might be expected, the income sources for benefit and non-benefit cases were also quite different. First, taking CSA PWCs, those on benefits were less likely to receive: earnings from employment or self employment, child maintenance and the Working Tax Credit (WTC) but more likely to receive: HB or CTB and IS. For CSA NRPs on the other hand, those in benefit cases were less likely to receive earnings from employment or self employment and Child Benefit, but were more likely to receive income from: WTC, IS and incapacity and disability benefits (listed on the showcard shown to respondents as 'Sickness and Disability Benefits'). The proportion of parents with income from savings and investments was very small (between one and three per cent).

²² Note that the finding that PWCs are more likely to get IS and that NRPs are more likely to get JSA is likely to reflect the fact that whilst carers can claim IS, typically NRPs will be required to 'sign on' and so claim JSA instead.

²³ This requirement is due to be abolished as part of the present child maintenance reform plans.

Table 2.13 Sources of income, by PWC and NRP status²⁴

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Earnings from employment or self employment	67	81	56	75	86	8	89
Child maintenance from a former husband/wife/partner	34	4	59	5	3	50	65
HB/CTB	32	12	40	13	11	71	18
Child Benefit	96	26	97	21	30	98	96
CTC	63	16	75	15	16	71	77
WTC	38	7	36	9	5	2	59
JSA	1	8	1	10	6	1	*
IS	29	9	41	13	6	99	1
Pension (state, employer or private)	1	5	2	4	6	1	3
Sickness and Disability Benefits	4	7	6	11	4	8	5
Other state benefits	1	1	1	2	*	1	1
Savings and investments (e.g. stocks and shares)	3	2	1	1	2	0	1
Student grant	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
Other kinds of regular allowance from outside the household	1	1	*	1	*	1	*
Not receiving any other source of income	0	1	*	2	1	0	*
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>614</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>627</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>261</i>	<i>257</i>	<i>369</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>576</i>	<i>455</i>	<i>558</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>294</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>386</i>

Base: All parents.

2.6.2 Level of income

Turning to levels of household income, CSA PWCs were the least well-off, with 39 per cent of these parents having an income of under £10,000 compared to 20 per cent of CSA NRPs and 30 per cent of non-CSA PWCs. This difference seems to be driven mainly by CSA PWCs on benefit, 73 per cent of whom had an income of under £10,000 compared to 15 per cent of non-benefit CSA PWCs. There were no differences in the income distribution between benefit and non-benefit cases within CSA NRPs.

²⁴ The base is lower than elsewhere because of a program error as discussed in Section 1.3.4.

Table 2. 14 Household income, by PWC and NRP status²⁵

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Up to £9,999	30	20	39	22	19	73	15
£10,000-19,999	36	35	36	38	33	21	46
£20,000-29,999	16	22	13	17	26	2	21
£30,000 or more	19	23	12	23	23	4	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>571</i>	<i>404</i>	<i>594</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>229</i>	<i>243</i>	<i>351</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>571</i>	<i>405</i>	<i>594</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>263</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>374</i>

Base: All parents.

2.6.3 Poverty scales

Within the interview, parents were asked a set of questions from the Family Resources Survey (FRS) that are used to measure various aspects of poverty²⁶. The answers to these questions were scored and combined into three poverty scales: household poverty, child poverty and debt poverty. The scores were split into quintiles²⁷ where the first quintile comprises those who are most affluent and the fifth quintile comprises those subject to the most poverty. The distribution for each of the parents within each poverty score can be seen in Tables 2.15 to 2.17. Overall, across the three scales, CSA PWCs on benefits were more likely to be living in poverty than their non-benefit and non-CSA counterparts.

Looking firstly at 'household poverty' (which includes factors such as whether: the respondent has household insurance, can replace worn out furniture, can keep their accommodation warm enough in winter, etc.), CSA PWCs who were on benefit were the most likely to be experiencing poverty. Forty three per cent of them were in the poorest quintile, making them three times as likely to be experiencing poverty as CSA NRPs (17 per cent) and non-CSA PWCs or CSA PWCs who were not on benefit (both 14 per cent).

²⁵ The base is lower than elsewhere because of a program error; 112 cases didn't know the answer to this question and 40 cases refused.

²⁶ Note that these measures are not among those used by Government for the measurement of poverty. More information on the derivation of these scales can be found in the Appendix.

²⁷ Since a high proportion of parents scored zero on child and debt poverty, in these tables the quintiles at the most affluent end of the distribution have been combined.

Table 2.15 Household poverty, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
First quintile	25	15	11	12	18	3	17
Second quintile	25	24	21	25	24	12	26
Third quintile	20	23	22	25	21	24	21
Fourth quintile	16	21	21	19	22	19	22
Fifth quintile (greatest poverty)	14	17	26	18	15	43	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	649	479	626	209	270	255	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	649	478	627	173	305	232	395

Base: All parents.

The pattern was the same for PWCs when looking at the child poverty scale (which includes factors such as whether the respondent's child: has any leisure equipment, has friends round for tea or a snack at least once a fortnight, etc.). CSA PWCs who were on benefit were twice as likely to experience child poverty than non-CSA PWCs and CSA PWCs who were not on benefit (25 per cent compared to 13 per cent respectively). Where CSA NRPs had children in their households, they were equally likely to be experiencing poverty on this measure as CSA PWCs.

Table 2.16 Child poverty, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
First/second quintile	50	37	37	[27]	44	22	47
Third quintile	26	35	27	[35]	35	29	26
Fourth quintile	11	11	18	[14]	9	24	14
Fifth quintile (greatest poverty)	13	17	18	[25]	12	25	13
<i>Weighted base</i>	647	121	626	47	74	255	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	647	128	627	38	90	232	395

Base: All households with children.

Again, the pattern is similar (though not as stark) when looking at debt poverty, measured by whether the respondent was up-to-date with a variety of bills, e.g. gas bill, council tax, telephone bill, etc. CSA PWCs who were on benefit were

more likely than others to be experiencing debt poverty. Twenty-eight per cent were in the lowest quintile, compared to 17 to 20 per cent in the other groups.

Table 2.17 Debt poverty, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
First/second/third quintile	70	69	63	65	72	55	69
Fourth quintile	13	12	15	15	9	17	13
Fifth quintile (greatest poverty)	17	19	22	20	19	28	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	644	476	625	208	268	255	369
<i>Unweighted base</i>	644	475	626	172	303	232	394

Base: All parents.

2.6.4 Housing tenure

Looking now at housing tenure (Table 2.18), the differences are stark between the CSA PWCs on benefit and the other groups. Whilst at least three in ten of all other groups were 'owning a property with the help of a mortgage', only six per cent of CSA PWCs on benefit had a mortgage, whilst nine in ten (89 per cent) were renting.

Though less stark, CSA NRPs who were benefit cases (i.e. their ex-partners were on benefit) were less likely to own their property with the help of a mortgage and were correspondingly more likely to rent.

Table 2.18 Tenure, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Own it outright	5	7	1	6	8	1	1
Own it with the help of a mortgage or loan	42	38	29	31	43	6	44
Pay part rent and part mortgage	2	2	1	2	2	*	2
Rent it	48	47	66	54	41	89	49
Live rent-free	2	6	3	6	6	3	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	647	476	626	208	269	255	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	647	476	627	172	304	232	395

Base: All parents.

2.7 Friendliness of current relationship

Section 2.3.4 explored how friendly separated parents had been with their ex-partners at the point that they broke up. This section reports on the friendliness of the **current** relationship between respondents and their ex-partners. As is known from this and other research, relations between the separated parents are crucial to the success of any contact and maintenance arrangements. This has been considered in relation to other aspects of their prior relationships and their current circumstances. (It will be used throughout the report to explore associations with contact arrangements, finances and so forth.)

The group of separated parents least likely to have friendly relationships was CSA PWCs who were not on benefit. Twenty-four per cent of these parents considered their current relationship with their ex-partner to be very or quite friendly compared to 34 per cent of CSA PWCs on benefit and 41 per cent of non-CSA PWCs. This pattern is exactly as would be expected, given that many non-CSA PWCs have managed to organise maintenance without the involvement of the CSA and those in benefit cases have been obliged to, rather than have chosen to, involve the CSA. On average CSA NRPs rate their relationships better than their PWC counterparts, although, again, those in benefit cases seem to have more friendly relationships than those in non-benefit cases.

Table 2.19 Friendliness of current relationship, by PWC and NRP status²⁸

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Very or quite friendly	41	35	28	47	26	34	24
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	21	20	25	19	21	25	26
Not very or not at all friendly	14	27	29	22	31	22	33
No current contact with ex-partner ¹	24	18	18	13	22	19	17
<i>Weighted base</i>	613	468	626	204	265	256	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	613	468	628	169	299	233	395

Base: All parents.

¹ This 'current no contact' is as defined by the respondents at this question and does not correspond directly to 'having contact in the last 12 months' at Table 3.1 (ie some people who have had no contact in the past 12 months have rated their relationship on the 'friendly' scale rather than say they have no contact).

²⁸ The base is lower than elsewhere because of a program error as discussed in Section 1.3.4.

2.7.1 Friendliness of current relationship by re-partnering

As can be seen in Tables 2.20 and 2.21, there is an association between whether one or other parent has re-partnered and the friendliness of their current relationship. Table 2.20 shows how the friendliness of the current relationship varies according to whether or not the respondent has a new partner living in the household. This only seems to influence the friendliness of the relationship for CSA NRPs. CSA NRPs who have re-partnered seem to be less friendly with their ex-partners than those who have not re-partnered (only 22 per cent of CSA NRPs who had re-partnered thought their relationships were very or quite friendly compared to 43 per cent of CSA NRPs who had not re-partnered).

Table 2.20 Friendliness of current relationship, by whether the respondent has a current partner in the household

	Non-CSA PWCs		CSA NRPs		CSA PWCs	
	Single %	Re-partnered %	Single %	Re-partnered %	Single %	Re-partnered %
Very or quite friendly	39	47	43	22	28	28
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	21	21	18	23	26	24
Not very or not at all friendly	15	11	24	30	28	32
No current contact with ex-partner	24	21	14	24	18	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>498</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>286</i>	<i>183</i>	<i>511</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>498</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>266</i>	<i>202</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>125</i>

Base: All parents.

In contrast to the influence of the respondent's re-partnering, re-partnering of ex-partners seems to be negatively associated with the friendliness of their current relationship (Table 2.21). As seen in Table 2.8, a substantial minority of respondents did not know whether or not their ex-partners had re-partnered. Therefore, as before, parents in this situation are included in Table 2.21. For all groups, those most likely to say that their relationship was very or quite friendly were parents whose ex-partners were still single and those least likely to say so were parents who did not know whether or not their ex-partners had re-partnered. It is likely that this is associated with the contact between parents since a substantial proportion of parents who did not know whether or not their ex-partners had re-partnered, had no contact with their ex-partners, whilst parents whose ex-partners were still single were the most likely to have current contact with their ex-partners.

Table 2.21 Friendliness of current relationship, by whether their ex-partner has re-partnered

	Ex-partner re-partnered %	Ex-partner single %	Don't know %
Non-CSA PWCs			
Very or quite friendly	45	59	20
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	30	20	12
Not very or not at all friendly	15	12	16
No current contact with ex-partner	11	9	52
<i>Weighted base</i>	246	166	199
<i>Unweighted base</i>	246	166	199
CSA NRPs			
Very or quite friendly	31	61	19
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	21	14	24
Not very or not at all friendly	29	18	29
No current contact with ex-partner	18	6	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	232	99	131
<i>Unweighted base</i>	227	96	138
CSA PWCs			
Very or quite friendly	23	45	21
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	25	30	23
Not very or not at all friendly	36	19	24
No current contact with ex-partner	16	6	32
<i>Weighted base</i>	312	140	168
<i>Unweighted base</i>	326	135	162

Base: All parents.

2.7.2 Friendliness of current relationship by aspects of prior relationship

Looking at how the friendliness of the current relationship varies by aspects of the prior relationship, first Table 2.22 shows how this varies by the length of the relationship prior to break-up. For both CSA and non-CSA PWCs there is a clear pattern that parents who had been in longer-term relationships have friendlier current relationships than those in shorter-term relationships (whilst a similar pattern can also be observed for CSA NRPs, perhaps due to the smaller base sizes, these differences are not statistically significant). Likewise, the level of contact varies by the length of the relationship prior to break-up. Indeed, for all groups, parents who had been in longer-term relationships were more likely to have contact with their ex-partners than those who had been in shorter-term relationships.

Table 2.22 Friendliness of current relationship, by length of relationship prior to break-up

	Never in a relationship %	< 2 years %	2 < 5 years %	10 < 15 years %	> 15 years %
Non-CSA PWCs					
Very or quite friendly	13	31	41	47	47
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	3	18	24	28	25
Not very or not at all friendly	10	7	9	14	20
No current contact with ex-partner	74	43	26	11	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	62	67	91	123	223
<i>Unweighted base</i>	62	67	91	123	223
CSA NRPs					
Very or quite friendly	[7]	[30]	39	44	31
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	[3]	[12]	21	18	25
Not very or not at all friendly	[52]	[23]	21	27	30
No current contact with ex-partner	[38]	[34]	20	11	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	22	34	117	108	150
<i>Unweighted base</i>	18	39	102	105	164
CSA PWCs					
Very or quite friendly	[23]	21	31	37	19
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	[26]	24	27	27	25
Not very or not at all friendly	[22]	20	27	25	41
No current contact with ex-partner	[28]	35	15	11	15
<i>Weighted base</i>	29	92	157	137	169
<i>Unweighted base</i>	27	91	152	139	179

Base: All parents.

Marital status had some association with the friendliness of the current relationship. These differences were largely driven by those who had been unmarried and not living together. For instance, non-CSA PWCs who had been unmarried and not living together had the lowest likelihood of having a very or quite friendly relationship (23 per cent compared to 54 per cent of parents who had been unmarried and living together and 44 per cent of parents who had been married and living together). Furthermore, for both non-CSA PWCs and CSA PWCs, parents who were unmarried and not living together were most likely to have no current contact with their ex-partners.

2.7.3 Reasons for break-up

In order to look at how the friendliness of the relationship varied by reasons for break-up, a number of the reasons presented in Table 2.5 were combined into themes. There were no differences between the friendliness of the relationship according to whether either member of the separated couple had: been seeing someone else, had emotional problems or depression or had financial or money problems.

However, if there had been violence in the relationship (whether violence towards their partner or towards the children), this had a strong influence on the friendliness of the current relationship. For all parent groups, violence was associated with less friendly relationships and for both non-CSA and CSA PWCs violence was associated with a lower likelihood that they had current contact with their ex-partners (Table 2.23).

Table 2.23 Friendliness of current relationship, by whether the relationship broke down due to violence

	Non-CSA PWCs		CSA NRPs		CSA PWCs	
	Not violent %	Violent %	Not violent %	Violent %	Not violent %	Violent %
Very or quite friendly	50	19	39	13	32	16
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	25	22	21	20	26	25
Not very or not at all friendly	12	25	24	38	28	36
No current contact with ex-partner	13	35	16	29	15	24
<i>Weighted base</i>	422	97	377	55	423	147
<i>Unweighted base</i>	422	97	383	52	425	152

Base: All parents who had lived with their partners.

For non-CSA PWCs, the presence of alcohol or drug problems was associated with less friendly relationships, although there were no significant differences among CSA NRPs or CSA PWCs (Table 2.24).

Table 2.24 Friendliness of current relationship, by whether the relationship broke down due to alcohol or drug problems

	Non-CSA PWCs		CSA NRPs		CSA PWCs	
	No problems %	Problems %	No problems %	Problems %	No problems %	Problems %
Very or quite friendly	48	23	36	26	28	25
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	25	20	21	30	26	21
Not very or not at all friendly	12	26	26	25	28	38
No current contact with ex-partner	15	31	17	18	18	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>445</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>403</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>472</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>445</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>483</i>	<i>94</i>

Base: All parents who had lived with their partners.

To explore relationship tension, reasons were combined that related to: growing apart, having a lack of commitment to each other, having differing priorities, growing to dislike each other and general relationship breakdown. Such relationship tension influenced the friendliness of the current relationship only for CSA PWCs, among whom this tension was associated with less friendly relationships (Table 2.25).

Table 2. 25 Friendliness of current relationship, by whether the relationship broke down due to relationship tension

	Non-CSA PWCs		CSA NRPs		CSA PWCs	
	No problems %	Problems %	No problems %	Problems %	No problems %	Problems %
Very or quite friendly	40	47	35	36	22	31
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	22	26	16	24	25	26
Not very or not at all friendly	12	16	28	24	28	31
No current contact with ex-partner	27	10	21	16	24	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>221</i>	<i>298</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>285</i>	<i>233</i>	<i>338</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>221</i>	<i>298</i>	<i>157</i>	<i>278</i>	<i>241</i>	<i>336</i>

Base: All parents who had lived with their partners.

As might be expected, there is a strong relationship between the friendliness of the current relationship and the friendliness of the prior relationship. For all parent groups, those who had the friendliest relationships prior to break-up have the friendliest current relationships. Furthermore, for non-CSA PWCs, friendlier prior relationships are associated with a greater likelihood that the parent has current contact with their ex-partner (Table 2.26).

Table 2.26 Friendliness of current relationship, by friendliness of relationship prior to break-up

	Very or quite friendly %	Neither friendly nor unfriendly %	Not very or not at all friendly %
Non-CSA PWCs			
Very or quite friendly	74	43	26
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	13	39	22
Not very or not at all friendly	5	4	26
No current contact with ex-partner	7	14	26
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>261</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>261</i>
CSA NRPs			
Very or quite friendly	68	33	27
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	13	32	20
Not very or not at all friendly	6	18	34
No current contact with ex-partner	13	17	19
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>267</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>275</i>
CSA PWCs			
Very or quite friendly	49	32	22
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	23	32	25
Not very or not at all friendly	21	20	33
No current contact with ex-partner	6	16	20
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>398</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>403</i>

Base: All parents.

Analysis was also carried out on the proportions of parents who reported a change in the level of friendliness of their relationship with their ex-partners between the point of break-up and the time of the survey interview. In other words, it looked at the proportion of parents who rated their current relationships higher up the

five-point 'very friendly' to 'not at all friendly' scale than their prior relationships, or vice versa. It seems that CSA PWCs who were not on benefit were more likely than non-CSA PWCs to report that their relationship had deteriorated (11 per cent compared to six per cent). This may have been a reason for them turning to the CSA (although this causality cannot be tested with the available data).

2.8 Ethnicity

The overwhelming majority of separated parents from all of the parent groups was of white ethnic origin (between 88 and 91 per cent). There were no differences in the ethnic make-up of any of the groups, or between benefit and non-benefit cases for either NRPs or PWCs (Table 2.27).

Table 2.27 Ethnicity, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
White	88	89	90	88	90	88	91
Black Caribbean	3	3	2	1	4	1	3
Black African	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
Black other	1	*	*	1	0	0	1
Asian Indian	*	1	1	1	2	0	1
Asian Pakistani	2	1	2	1	1	4	1
Asian Bangladeshi	1	1	1	1	*	3	0
Chinese	0	*	0	1	0	0	0
Mixed race	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
Other	2	2	1	3	1	3	*
<i>Weighted base</i>	649	478	625	209	269	254	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	649	477	626	173	304	231	395

Base: All parents.

2.9 Long-standing disability and illness

Lastly, Table 2.28 explores whether the separated parents had a long-standing illness or disability²⁹. Twenty per cent of CSA PWCs had a long-standing illness or disability, which was similar to the proportion of CSA NRPs (25 per cent) but higher than the proportion of non-CSA PWCs who had a long-standing illness or disability.

²⁹ Parents were asked about conditions lasting for 12 months or more, but were not asked a follow-up question about the extent to which it affected the types of work they could do.

There was no difference between benefit and non-benefit cases among CSA NRPs. However, this was not the case among CSA PWCs, where those in benefit cases were more likely than those in non-benefit cases to have a long-standing illness or disability (26 per cent compared to 16 per cent).

Table 2.28 Long-standing disability and illness, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Yes	16	25	20	26	25	26	16
No	84	75	80	74	75	74	84
<i>Weighted base</i>	649	479	626	209	270	255	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	649	478	627	173	305	232	395

Base: All parents.

2.10 Non-Child Support Agency non-resident parents

The majority of non-CSA NRPs had one child (60 per cent), with only 34 per cent having two children and six per cent having three or more. As an indication of how old their children are, the median age of the youngest child was 11 years of age and the median age of the oldest child was 13 years of age.

The median length of non-CSA NRPs' relationships prior to break-up was ten years. In the majority of instances the NRP reported that they had been married to their ex-partners and living together (71 per cent); 23 per cent had been unmarried and living together and only three per cent had been unmarried and not living together or not in a couple at all. At the point of break-up, most non-CSA NRPs thought that their relationships with their ex-partners were 'not very or not at all' friendly (46 per cent compared to 22 per cent who thought that their relationship was 'very or quite friendly').

The most common reason given by the NRPs for the relationship ending (they could give more than one reason) was that they and their ex-partners had grown apart (57 per cent). In 33 per cent of cases their ex-partners had been seeing someone else and 24 per cent of the NRPs reported that they had broken up because they argued with their ex-partners all the time. In summary, 20 per cent attributed the reason for the breakdown of their relationship to themselves, 39 per cent attributed the reason to their ex-partners, 71 per cent to tension in their relationship and eight per cent to other reasons.

Turning to re-partnering, half of non-CSA NRPs had re-partnered. A similar proportion of their ex-partners had also re-partnered (55 per cent), although in 13 per cent of cases the non-CSA NRP did not know whether or not their ex-partners had re-partnered.

The vast majority of non-CSA NRPs were working full-time (86 per cent) with very few working part-time (one per cent working 1-15 hours per week and two per cent working 16-29 hours per week). In terms of their socio-economic status, over half were in higher or lower managerial and professional occupations (56 per cent) after which there was a relatively even spread among the lower socio-economic groups (ranging from eight per cent in lower supervisory and technical operative occupations to 14 per cent in semi-routine or routine occupations). Turning to their knowledge about their ex-partner's working status, 19 per cent of non-CSA NRPs did not know this information, 67 per cent reported that their ex-partners were in work and 14 per cent reported that they were not.

As would be expected given the high proportion of non-CSA NRPs that were in work, the most common source of income was earnings from employment or self-employment (88 per cent). Just under a quarter received Child Benefit (24 per cent) and 13 per cent received CTC. All other sources of income were received by fewer than ten per cent of these parents. Very few non-CSA NRPs had an income under £10,000 (nine per cent), with the highest proportion having an income over £30,000 (48 per cent). As such, only six per cent of non-CSA NRPs fell into the poorest income quintile of household poverty (compared to 48 per cent falling into the most affluent quintile). The same pattern can be seen for child poverty and debt poverty where only six and five per cent of cases respectively fell into the poorest quintile.

Most non-CSA NRPs felt that their current relationships with their ex-partners were 'very or quite friendly' (59 per cent) and only four per cent had no current contact with their ex-partners.

Looking at the ethnicity of non-CSA NRPs shows that the vast majority classified themselves as white (96 per cent). There were no Asian respondents within the sample group. However, two per cent were Black Caribbean, one per cent were Black African and the remaining two per cent were of mixed ethnicity.

Nineteen per cent of non-CSA NRPs reported that they had a long-standing illness or disability.

2.11 Summary

This chapter looked at demographic profile of separated parents. Some of the chapter's key findings are outlined below:

- The children of CSA PWCs tended to be younger than those of non-CSA PWCs (the mean ages of their youngest children were seven years old and nine years old respectively). Where parents were on benefit, they tended to have younger children than those not on benefit.
- The length of parents' relationships prior to break-up also differed between the parent groups, with CSA benefit PWCs having shorter relationships than CSA non-benefit PWCs and their non-CSA counterparts.
- CSA PWCs on benefits were more likely to have been cohabiting and less likely to be married than other PWCs.
- Across all the separated parents, the most common reasons given for their relationship ending were: that they and their ex-partners had grown apart, that their ex-partners had been seeing someone else and that they and their ex-partner argued all the time. CSA PWCs were more likely to place blame on their ex-partners, e.g. saying that the relationship broke up because they were violent, or had alcohol or drug problems, whilst CSA NRPs were more likely to say that they had simply 'grown apart'.
- Non-CSA PWCs were more likely than CSA clients to say that their relationships with their ex-partners were friendly at the point of break-up.
- Within non-benefit cases, NRPs were more likely to have re-partnered than their PWC counterparts. At the other extreme, only three per cent of CSA PWCs on benefit had re-partnered.
- CSA NRPs were more likely than PWCs to be working full-time (72 per cent compared to 23 per cent of CSA PWCs and 38 per cent of non-CSA PWCs).
- CSA PWCs were the least well off. Thirty-nine per cent had an income below £10,000 compared to 20 per cent of CSA NRPs and 30 per cent of non-CSA PWCs. For benefit cases the figure was almost double at 73 per cent.
- The relative poverty of CSA PWCs (particularly the benefit cases) was reflected in all three of the poverty scales (household poverty, child poverty and debt poverty).
- CSA PWCs were more likely than other parents to rent their accommodation (again, this was particularly so for benefit cases: 89 per cent of whom were renting, compared to 47 per cent of CSA NRPs and 48 per cent of non-CSA PWCs). The other groups were more likely to own their accommodation with the help of a mortgage.
- Non-CSA PWCs had more friendly relationships with their ex-partners than CSA separated parents. The most acrimonious relationships were described by CSA non-benefit clients.

- CSA PWCs were more likely than non-CSA PWCs to have a long-standing illness or disability. This was most pronounced for benefit cases among CSA PWCs, where 26 per cent had a long-standing illness or disability compared to 16 per cent of non-benefit cases.
- The benefit and non-benefit CSA PWCs had distinctly different profiles, as would be expected given the very different routes by which they came to the CSA. Those on benefit had no choice but to use the CSA whilst those not on benefit came to the CSA because of an inability to resolve maintenance issues privately with their ex-partners. The latter is reflected in their reports on the reasons for break-up and their current relationships with their ex-partners, whilst the benefit cases show themselves, as would be expected, to be more economically disadvantaged.
- Similarly, there are two distinct groups within the non-CSA PWCs. There were those who had better relationships with their ex-partners, more stable relationships prior to break-up, higher incomes and so on – all factors which facilitate making successful private arrangements. There was then a group of PWCs who were particularly disadvantaged in these respects – never having been in a relationship with the NRP, on low incomes, not knowing where the NRP was, bad experiences during a relationship and so on. Although these PWCs might arguably have been CSA clients, given their likely receipt of benefit, it may be that the lack of information about the NRP meant that there was a decision not to pursue them for maintenance.

3 Contact arrangements

3.1 Introduction

Child maintenance and contact are inextricably linked in parents' minds, although the legal principles governing awards of child maintenance and arrangements for contact are entirely separate. It has been previously reported that many parents see the two issues as two sides of the same coin and previous research has confirmed the strong association between the two in practice (Wikeley *et al.*, 2001). So, where contact takes place between non-resident parents (NRPs) and their children, payment of child maintenance is more likely and compliance is better. What is less clear is the direction of travel: does contact increase the likelihood of child maintenance being paid or does payment of child maintenance result in more contact?

The new child maintenance scheme will be premised on encouraging more parents to make private arrangements, including those who currently have no option but to use the Child Support Agency (CSA). It is, therefore, important to have as full a picture as possible of separated parents' contact arrangements, whether or not they are at present involved with the CSA. If post-separation contact arrangements remain problematic – and research has shown that about one in ten cases involve high levels of conflict, sometimes involving repeated litigation over contact (Smart *et al.*, 2005) – then the prospects for parties making private agreements over the payment of maintenance may be bleak.

3.1.1 Plan of chapter

This chapter examines the nature of contact arrangements within separated families. It begins by reporting on the contact between the separated parents – the frequency, the reasons for contact and the decision-making role of both parents in their children's lives. The chapter then focuses on the NRPs' contact with their children, including whether the children have overnight stays and the extent of shared care. Finally, the report considers the separated parents' views of the contact arrangements they have – how happy they are with the level of contact and the ability to be flexible about arrangements, together with the prevalence of separated parents seeking legal advice over their contact arrangements.

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 deal solely with the three main sample groups: non-CSA parents with care (PWCs), CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs. For the reasons outlined in Section 1.3.3, the data relating to the smaller sample of non-CSA NRPs are reported on separately in Section 3.4.

3.2 Current contact with ex-partner

This section focuses on the separated parents' current contact arrangements and their relationships with their ex-partners. It considers the extent to which these differ between the various groups in our sample. As discussed in Section 2.7, non-CSA PWCs had more friendly relationships with their ex-partners than CSA separated parents, and CSA non-benefit clients described the most acrimonious relationships.

3.2.1 Whether ex-partners have had any contact since break-up

Separated parents were asked whether they had been in contact with their ex-partners in the last 12 months (or, if they had separated in that period, since their break-up³⁰). Table 3.1 shows whether or not parents had been in contact with their ex-partners during this period.

Table 3.1 Whether parents had been in contact with ex-partners in last 12 months, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Contact with ex-partner	70	77	73
No contact with ex-partner	30	23	27
<i>Weighted base</i>	613	468	626
<i>Unweighted base</i>	613	468	628

Base: All parents.

The majority of parents had been in contact with their ex-partners at least once in the previous year. Seventy per cent of non-CSA PWCs reported having done so, as did 73 per cent of CSA PWCs and 77 per cent of NRPs (differences between groups are not significant).

Those parents who had been in contact with their ex-partners within the past year were asked how frequently contact had been made. Table 3.2 summarises their answers.

³⁰ From now on, for simplicity, the report refers to the 'last 12 months' or 'previous year', which includes those who have separated within that period.

Table 3.2 Frequency of contact with ex-partner in last 12 months, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Every day or nearly every day	14	9	9	15	5
Twice or three times a week	22	23	18	27	12
Once a week	22	21	18	17	19
Once a fortnight	13	12	16	17	16
Once a month	9	10	10	11	10
A few times a year	14	16	21	8	30
Once a year	2	4	4	3	5
Less often	3	5	3	2	4
In summary					
Once a week or more	59	53	45	59	36
Less often	41	47	55	41	64
<i>Weighted base</i>	428	358	459	186	273
<i>Unweighted base</i>	428	360	454	166	288

Base: All parents with some contact with ex-partners in last 12 months.

Non-CSA PWCs were more likely to have had at least weekly contact (59 per cent) than CSA PWCs (45 per cent). This is likely to reflect the fact that the CSA population includes many non-benefit cases where the relationship between the parents has broken down. Further analysis showed that CSA PWCs on benefits had comparable levels of weekly contact with their ex-partners (59 per cent) to non-CSA PWCs. Conversely, only 36 per cent of CSA PWCs who were not on benefits had at least weekly contact with their ex-partner.

As expected, further analysis confirmed that frequency of contact was associated with the current quality of the relationship between the parents. Among non-CSA PWCs, 73 per cent of those who had (very or quite) friendly relationships with their ex-partners had at least weekly contact (weighted base: 248), compared to just 29 per cent of those whose relationships were not friendly (weighted base: 56). The two CSA parent groups had a very similar pattern.

Parents who had been in contact with their ex-partners since their break-up or within the last 12 months, were asked the reasons why this contact had occurred. Table 3.3 summarises the findings.

Table 3.3 Reasons for having contact with ex-partner, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Contact with children	64	79	68
Children's general health/well-being	48	45	39
Education/schooling	35	36	24
Other matters relating to children	23	30	19
Childcare arrangements	23	21	16
We are still friends	22	14	16
Problems children are having	21	27	20
Child maintenance payments	17	20	19
Other financial arrangements (not child maintenance)	12	12	7
Casual meeting	10	11	9
Legal proceedings (e.g. divorce)	7	10	7
Unwanted contact	4	5	6
Other	3	4	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>428</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>459</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>428</i>	<i>361</i>	<i>454</i>

Base: All parents with some contact with ex-partners in last 12 months.

The most common reason for parents having contact with their ex-partners, accounting for at least six out of ten cases, was having contact via their children. Other common reasons for having contact included discussions about their children's health, well being or education. Child maintenance payments were a reason for contact in, at most, around one in five cases.

3.2.2 Involvement in decision-making about children's lives

The Children Act 1989 makes it clear that parental responsibility for children survives separation and divorce. The courts have also ruled that both parents should be involved in major decisions over their children's lives (e.g. as regards education or health issues). Parents who reported having had some contact with one another in the past year, were asked who mainly made important decisions in their children's lives. Table 3.4 shows their answers.

Table 3.4 Involvement in making important decisions in children's lives where contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
PWC makes important decisions	87	84	96
NRP makes important decisions	1	4	1
It depends on the decision	11	12	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	375	283	356
<i>Unweighted base</i>	375	277	348

Base: All parents with some contact with ex-partners at least once a year.

The reality is, therefore, very different from the formal legal position. In practice, in those cases where contact occurs between the adults, over 80 per cent of all parents reported that the PWC made the important decisions in the child's life. In around one in ten cases it depended on the decision. Probably reflecting the increased likelihood of their having a good relationship with their ex-partners, non-CSA PWCs were more likely than CSA PWCs to report that it depended on the decision (11 per cent compared to four per cent). It is interesting to note the difference in perception of the CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs, with the latter more likely to perceive themselves as having a stake in important decision-making than the PWCs.

Involvement in decision-making on important issues was not affected appreciably by the current quality of the relationship with the ex-partner. However, further analysis showed that, among PWCs, joint decision-making was more likely to be reported among formerly married couples than among unmarried couples previously living together. For instance, 17 per cent of previously married non-CSA PWCs said that they made joint decisions with their ex-partner, compared to four per cent of those who had cohabited.

Many more PWCs than NRPs reported being happy with this balance (Table 3.5). Six in ten (60 per cent of non-CSA and 59 per cent of CSA) PWCs said they were 'very happy' with the balance, compared to only two in ten CSA NRPs (21 per cent). Conversely, 17 per cent of the NRPs reported being 'very unhappy' with this, compared to one per cent of non-CSA and three per cent of CSA PWCs. This shows that there is a substantial minority of NRPs who resent their lack of involvement in making key decisions in their children's lives.

Table 3.5 Level of happiness with who makes important decisions in children's lives where contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very happy	60	21	59
Fairly happy	28	32	26
Neither happy nor unhappy	8	11	8
Fairly unhappy	4	20	4
Very unhappy	1	17	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	378	284	358
<i>Unweighted base</i>	378	278	350

Base: All parents with some contact with ex-partners at least once a year.

3.3 Non-resident parents' contact arrangements with children

The link between contact and child maintenance is an established one (Bell *et al.*, 2007; Wikeley *et al.*, 2001). Where arrangements between ex-partners for contact between the NRP and the children work well, there is a better chance that child maintenance arrangements will be sustainable. Conversely, where families experience tension and conflict over child contact arrangements, payment of child maintenance is likely to be less reliable. This section explores the nature and variety of contact arrangements in place along with parents' responses to those arrangements.

3.3.1 NRP contact with children and the impact of distance between parents

Around seven in ten parents reported that the NRP had some contact with their children (Table 3.6, differences are not statistically significant). As might be expected, the likelihood of contact with children taking place was associated with the distance between households. For example, where it would take less than 15 minutes to get from one home to the other, 94 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 76 per cent of both the CSA groups reported some contact. Where the journey would take more than two hours, the comparative percentages were 66 per cent for non-CSA PWCs, 64 per cent for CSA PWCs and 69 per cent of NRPs.

Overall, around six in ten parents said that they could get to their ex-partners' homes within 30 minutes (59 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 61 per cent of CSA PWCs and 65 per cent of CSA NRPs). This is broadly consistent with the CSA's own data, which shows that 68 per cent of separated parents live less than 20 kilometres from each other (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2008, Table 26, which measures distances apart by postcode).

Table 3.6 Whether contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Contact of some type occurs	70	71	66
No contact occurs	30	29	34
<i>Weighted base</i>	612	449	609
<i>Unweighted base</i>	612	444	610

Base: All parent.

3.3.2 Patterns of contact

If there was contact between the NRP and their non-resident children, parents were asked about the type and frequency of contact, including overnight stays.

Types of contact

The ways in which NRPs report having contact with their children sometimes differed to the reports of PWCs (Table 3.7). For example, 41 per cent of CSA NRPs reported phone calls with their children compared to just 25 per cent of CSA PWCs. Similarly, they were more likely to report having face-to-face meetings and written contact. These differences may be explicable by PWCs either not knowing about certain forms of contact (e.g. by mobile phone) or seeking to downplay levels of contact.

Table 3.7 Types of contact that take place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Face-to-face meetings, including overnight stays	44	50	40
Face-to-face meetings, excluding overnight stays	27	29	24
Phone calls	34	41	25
Writing, e-mailing or texting	16	18	7
No contact	30	29	34
<i>Weighted base</i>	612	449	609
<i>Unweighted base</i>	612	444	610

Base: All parents.

Only three per cent of CSA NRPs reported that their contact with their children was supervised in any way.

Frequency of contact

Parents were asked about the frequency of face-to-face contact between NRPs and their children living with the PWC. CSA NRPs were more likely to report weekly face-to-face contact (68 per cent) than CSA PWCs (52 per cent).

Table 3.8 Frequency of face-to-face contact between NRPs and their non-resident children, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Every day or nearly every day	12	10	9
Twice or three times a week	28	34	20
Once a week	23	24	23
Once a fortnight	21	20	25
Once a month	8	5	10
A few times a year	8	7	11
Once a year	1	0	1
Less often	1	0	1
In summary			
Once a week or more	62	68	52
Less often	38	32	48
<i>Weighted base</i>	389	303	371
<i>Unweighted base</i>	389	300	364

Base: All parents where face-to-face contact arrangement in place.

Overnight stays

It can be seen that 50 per cent of NRPs and around 40 per cent of PWCs reported that the children sometimes stayed overnight with the NRP (Table 3.7). Parents were asked about the frequency of these stays. Again, NRPs were more likely to report a higher frequency of overnight stays than PWCs (and non-CSA PWCs reported more than CSA PWCs) (Table 3.9). Where overnight stays took place, 68 per cent of NRPs but only 52 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 42 per cent of CSA PWCs said that the children stayed over with the NRP for at least 52 nights a year (or one night a week, the threshold for a reduction in child maintenance liability under the post-2003 child support scheme). The reporting differences may be explained by the fact that there are both emotional and financial incentives for NRPs to overplay levels of overnight stays and conversely, for PWCs to downplay such contact.

Table 3.9 Proportion of parents whose children have overnight contact with NRP, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Less than 52 nights a year (less than one a week)	48	32	58
52 to 103 nights a year	32	38	28
104 to 155 nights a year	12	21	8
156 to 174 nights a year	6	7	3
175 nights a years or more	3	1	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	268	226	246
<i>Unweighted base</i>	268	228	240

Base: All parents where overnight contact arrangement in place.

Shared care

Parents were also asked to describe the care and contact arrangements for their children in terms of whether care was equally shared, close to equally shared or whether the PWC was the main carer. CSA NRPs were more likely to assert that they had equal, or close to equal, shared care than PWCs but around eight out of ten (78 per cent) still accepted that the PWC was the main carer. As expected, the results in Table 3.10 broadly mirror those relating to the responsibility for important decision-making set out in Table 3.4.

Table 3.10 Extent of shared care of children, by PWC and NRP status

	Non CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Equally shared care	8	10	5
Close to equally shared care	7	12	3
PWC is main carer	85	78	92
<i>Weighted base</i>	382	301	366
<i>Unweighted base</i>	382	298	359

Base: All parents with child contact arrangements.

3.3.3 Parties' views about contact arrangements

Parents were asked a series of questions about how well their existing contact arrangements were working. The answers shown here refer to all kinds of contact: face-to-face, telephone or written (including e-mail and texting).

Happiness with level of contact

Parents were asked how happy they were with the contact arrangements (if any) in place for their children. The results for families where there was contact between the children and their NRP are shown in Table 3.11; parallel findings for families where there is no contact between the parent and children are shown in Table 3.13.

Table 3.11 Happiness with contact arrangements where contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very happy	37	26	25
Fairly happy	32	36	33
Neither happy nor unhappy	14	6	17
Not very happy	12	22	15
Not at all happy	5	10	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	429	304	406
<i>Unweighted base</i>	429	300	404

Base: All parents with child contact arrangements.

Where some contact arrangements with children were in place, Table 3.11 shows that non-CSA PWCs were happier than CSA clients with those arrangements. In all, 69 per cent of non-CSA PWCs were very or fairly happy with them, compared to 58 per cent of CSA PWCs and 62 per cent of CSA NRPs. As Table 3.12 shows, for all parents dissatisfied with the arrangements, their reason was overwhelmingly (84 per cent or more) because contact was thought to be too little.

Table 3.12 Reasons for unhappiness with contact arrangements where contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Too much contact	11	2	16
Too little contact	88	98	84
<i>Weighted base</i>	70	96	100
<i>Unweighted base</i>	70	98	108

Base: All parents unhappy with child contact arrangements.

As might be expected, where no contact arrangements with children were in place at all, Table 3.13 shows that NRPs were much less happy with such a state of affairs than PWCs. Fifty-seven per cent of CSA NRPs were 'not at all happy' to

have no contact, compared to 27 per cent of CSA PWCs. CSA PWCs were much more likely than non-CSA PWCs to express their dissatisfaction with the lack of contact between the child and the NRP. Again, this is likely to reflect the fact that overall, non-CSA PWCs are typically on better terms with their ex-partners than those covered by the CSA.

Table 3.13 Happiness with contact arrangements where no contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very happy	40	1	26
Fairly happy	12	4	10
Neither happy nor unhappy	27	15	28
Not very happy	10	23	9
Not at all happy	11	57	27
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>207</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>211</i>

Base: All parents with no child contact arrangements.

Changes in contact arrangements and tension between parents

Where there was contact between NRPs and their children, parents were asked about how easy it was to make changes to contact arrangements if required. CSA clients appear to be less flexible than non-CSA parents in their willingness to change their arrangements (Table 3.14). Three in ten (30 per cent of CSA PWCs and 28 per cent of CSA NRPs) found their ex-partner unwilling to make such changes, compared to two in ten (18 per cent) non-CSA PWCs.

Table 3.14 Willingness of ex-partner to change contact arrangements, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very willing	40	24	19
Fairly willing	33	40	35
Not very willing	12	14	17
Not at all willing	6	14	13
Never change arrangements	2	3	4
Make arrangements with child	3	4	3
No regular arrangements	4	2	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>370</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>299</i>	<i>366</i>

Base: All parents with child contact arrangements.

Conversely, eight in ten (79 per cent) non-CSA parents found it fairly easy or very easy to change contact arrangements, compared to seven in ten (68 per cent of CSA PWCs and 70 per cent of CSA NRPs) (Table 3.15).

Table 3.15 Ease of changing contact arrangements, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very easy	36	32	30
Fairly easy	43	38	38
Neither easy nor difficult	8	9	10
Fairly difficult	4	8	7
Very difficult	2	4	2
Never change arrangements	1	3	3
Make arrangements with child	3	3	2
No regular arrangements	2	3	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	383	304	371
<i>Unweighted base</i>	383	300	366

Base: All parents with child contact arrangements.

There was also broad agreement as to which parent sought to change contact arrangements. Only about one in eight separated parents said that it was fairly common or very common for the NRP to change contact arrangements (15 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 13 per cent of CSA PWCs and 15 per cent of CSA NRPs). On the other hand between a quarter and a third of parents said that it was common for the PWC to change the contact arrangements (27 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 36 per cent of CSA PWCs and 31 per cent of CSA NRPs). This difference presumably reflects a range of factors, such as the PWC's other commitments, including obligations to other children and (especially as regards contact with older children) the fluidity of children's social lives.

Table 3.16 shows the proportion of parents with some contact arrangements in place who felt that these were a cause of tension between them and their ex-partners. Although the vast majority (over 70 per cent) of all reported no problem with their former partner over the existing contact arrangements, tensions were greater among CSA parents compared to non-CSA parents. Around one in five (19 per cent) CSA NRPs and 17 per cent of CSA PWCs stated that contact represented a major cause of tension, compared to eight per cent of non-CSA PWCs. This is broadly consistent with earlier research findings that about one in ten cases of relationship breakdown litigate contact and that these 'hard cases' involve intractable levels of conflict (Blackwell and Dawe, 2003; Smart *et al.*, 2005).

Table 3.16 Whether contact arrangements were a cause of tension, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
A major cause of tension	8	19	17
A minor cause of tension	7	10	9
Not a cause of tension	85	71	74
<i>Weighted base</i>	427	356	454
<i>Unweighted base</i>	427	357	450

Base: All parents with child contact arrangements.

Seeking legal advice about levels of contact arrangements

Where there were some existing contact arrangements in place, a substantial minority of all parents had at some time sought legal advice about such arrangements (e.g. from a lawyer or citizens advice bureau): see Table 3.17. CSA parents were much more likely to have done so than non-CSA parents (43 per cent of CSA NRPs and 41 per cent of CSA PWCs, compared to 21 per cent of non-CSA PWCs). Further analysis of the data showed that where a couple had previously been living together, their marital status had no effect on the likelihood of seeking advice about contact arrangements, assuming that some contact was in place.

Table 3.17 Whether legal advice was sought about contact arrangements where contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Has sought legal advice about contact	21	43	41
Has not sought legal advice about contact	79	57	59
<i>Weighted base</i>	612	467	626
<i>Unweighted base</i>	612	467	628

Base: All parents with child contact arrangements.

3.3.4 Contact and child maintenance

Previous research has shown that child maintenance is more likely to be in payment where there are effective child contact arrangements in place (Wikeley *et al.* 2001). This relationship was confirmed in the present study, as shown by Table 3.18. The association was especially strong for non-CSA PWCs: nearly all

of the group reporting receipt of child maintenance also stated that there was a contact arrangement in place (97 per cent). For both groups of CSA parents, around seven in ten parents who confirmed that some contact was in place also reported payment or receipt of child maintenance (74 per cent of CSA NRPs and 71 per cent of CSA PWCs).

Table 3.18 Whether child maintenance was in payment where some contact takes place, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs		CSA NRPs		CSA PWCs	
	In payment %	Not in payment %	In payment %	Not in payment %	In payment %	Not in payment %
Contact of some type	97	53	74	[46]	71	53
No contact	3	47	26	[54]	29	47
<i>Weighted base</i>	226	372	402	[47]	422	169
<i>Unweighted base</i>	226	372	407	[36]	423	168

Base: All parents with child contact arrangements

In the next chapter we explore the relationship between the level of contact and the amount of child maintenance in payment in more detail (Section 4.4.1).

3.3.5 NRP contact with children: an overview

Much of the public debate about NRPs' contact with children centres around the difficulties experienced by some NRPs in securing and, where appropriate, enforcing contact orders against the parent with residence. These problems led the Government to introduce a range of new enforcement measures for contact orders in the Children and Adoption Act 2006. However, it is important to keep these difficulties in perspective. The present study shows that 71 per cent of CSA NRPs report having some form of contact with their children, most of whom have face-to-face contact on at least a weekly basis. Almost two-thirds of those CSA NRPs with contact (62 per cent) were broadly happy with the arrangement. The main reason, by far, for unhappiness with contact arrangements, for NRPs and PWCs alike, is that the level of contact is seen as too little rather than too much. There are, undoubtedly, some problems – for example, contact is a major cause of tension for NRPs in about one in five cases where it takes place and eight in ten CSA NRPs with no contact are unhappy with that state of affairs. The data also confirms the strong association between the existence of contact and the payment of child maintenance. However, just because some NRPs are unhappy with contact does not mean that child maintenance is not being paid: one in four compliant CSA NRPs (26 per cent) report not having contact with their children.

3.4 Non-Child Support Agency non-resident parents

As explained in Section 1.3.3, the limited size and likely lack of representativeness of the sample of non-CSA NRPs means that they have not been included in the comparative analysis in the rest of this chapter. Here, the key findings from the non-CSA NRPs are briefly summarised.

The data relating to contact confirms that this sample includes a high proportion of NRPs with friendly relationships with their ex-partners and good contact arrangements.

Ninety-three per cent of the non-CSA NRPs had had some contact with their ex-partners since the break-up or in the previous 12 months. Of those, 62 per cent had weekly contact. Three in ten (29 per cent) non-CSA NRPs had shared decision-making on important matters in their children's lives.

Almost all (95 per cent) had contact with their children. Among those having contact, about two-thirds (66 per cent) had face-to-face contact at least once a week. A quarter (27 per cent) of non-CSA NRPs had their children to stay 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.

Eight in ten (78 per cent) non-CSA NRPs reported that it was easy to change their contact arrangements if needs be. Almost all (94 per cent) said that their contact arrangements were not a cause of tension between them and their ex-partners, with just two per cent reporting that it was a major source of tension. Around three in ten non-CSA NRPs had sought legal advice at some time about contact arrangements.

3.5 Summary

This chapter looked at a range of issues associated with contact after relationship breakdown. It examined both contact between ex-partners and between NRPs and their children. Some of the chapter's key findings are outlined below.

Contact between ex-partners

- Around three-quarters of parents had been in contact with their ex-partners at least once in the past year; of these, around half had been in contact with their ex-partners once a week or more.
- Non-CSA PWCs were more likely to have frequent (i.e. weekly) contact with their ex-partners than CSA PWCs (59 per cent compared to 45 per cent).
- The most common reason for having contact was through having contact with their children. Other common reasons included discussing their children's health or well-being or their education.

- Despite the formal legal position, joint decision-making on important issues in the child's life occurs in only a small proportion of cases. However, only about a third (37 per cent) of CSA NRPs were unhappy with the fact that PWCs made most decisions.
- Involvement in decision-making on important issues was not affected appreciably by the current quality of the relationship with the ex-partner.

Contact arrangements between NRPs and their children

- Around seven in ten NRPs had contact with their children. NRPs reported having more frequent contact (including overnight stays) compared to the reports of PWCs.
- The likelihood of contact with children taking place was associated with the distance between households.
- Where some child contact arrangements were in place, non-CSA PWCs were happier with the arrangements than CSA parents.
- NRPs were more likely than PWCs to be unhappy with the levels of contact involved but for all parents who were unhappy the reason for this dissatisfaction was overwhelmingly because contact was thought to be too little.
- Where no child contact arrangements were in place, only five per cent of CSA NRPs were happy with this compared to 36 per cent of CSA PWCs.
- CSA clients appear to be less flexible than non-CSA parents in their willingness to alter contact arrangements if required. Three in ten CSA parents found their ex-partner to be unwilling, compared to two in ten non-CSA PWCs.
- Where child contact arrangements were in place, they were a major cause of tension in about one in five CSA cases and one in 12 non-CSA cases of relationship breakdown at the time of the survey; a substantial minority of all parents had at some time sought legal advice about contact arrangements.

4 Financial arrangements

4.1 Introduction

The Child Support Agency (CSA) publishes detailed statistics about the maintenance calculations that it makes, including amounts, compliance rates and methods of payment (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2008). Much less is known about the details of financial arrangements in cases of relationship breakdown where the CSA is not and has not been involved. However, existing research does show that private maintenance agreements tend to be for higher amounts and have better compliance rates than CSA orders (Hoxhallari *et al.*, 2007). On the other hand, at present the CSA population largely comprises of parents on lower incomes, who have to use its services because the parent with care (PWC) is claiming Income Support (IS), and parents in non-benefit cases who cannot reach a workable private agreement.

4.1.1 Plan of chapter

This chapter looks at the financial arrangements in place between ex-partners. In particular, it considers the types of different arrangements (whether through the CSA, courts or privately) and, where no arrangements are in place, the reasons for their absence. It also examines the levels and methods of maintenance in payment/received, as well as variations from the agreed/ordered level. The chapter explores separated parents' perceptions of the fairness and affordability of maintenance levels, as well as their discussions over maintenance and ways in which informal support is provided. It considers a range of issues around compliance, including compliance rates, reasons for non-payment or late payment and the acceptability (or otherwise) to PWCs of reduced payments in settlement of arrears of child maintenance.

4.2 Type of financial arrangement

Both non-CSA PWCs and CSA clients (both PWCs and non-resident parents (NRPs)) were asked about the nature of any financial arrangements in place between themselves and their ex-partners. As the questions varied necessarily between

non-CSA and CSA parents, the two groups are reported on separately in the next two sections.

4.2.1 Non-CSA PWCs

Only four in ten (38 per cent) non-CSA PWCs had a maintenance arrangement in place (Table 4.1). (The reasons for not having an arrangement are discussed in Section 4.3.) Twenty-eight per cent of non-CSA PWCs had a private arrangement and a further ten per cent were subject to a court order or consent order³¹.

As anticipated, there was a strong association between the current quality of the parents' relationship and the existence of a private arrangement. So, nearly half (46 per cent) of those who were on friendly terms with their ex-partner had a private arrangement, as compared with just three per cent of those with no current contact with the other parent. However, the same proportion (46 per cent) of those who were on friendly terms had no current maintenance arrangement in place, despite having a good relationship (see further Section 4.3). There may, however, be other forms of assistance in such cases; the role of informal support is discussed in Section 4.7.

Table 4.1 Type of current maintenance arrangement for non-CSA PWCs, by quality of current relationship with ex-partner

	Very or quite friendly %	Neither friendly nor unfriendly %	Not very or not at all friendly %	No current contact %	Total %
Court or consent order	8	16	20	2	10
Private arrangement	46	27	19	3	28
Unknown	0	0	0	1	*
No arrangement	46	57	60	94	62
<i>Weighted base</i>	249	131	88	145	655
<i>Unweighted base</i>	249	131	88	145	655

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

The type of financial arrangement in place was also explored in the light of the parties' previous relationship status. Table 4.2 shows that one in five (20 per cent) non-CSA couples who had lived together as a married couple were subject to a court order or consent order, compared to just one in 50 couples who had

³¹ The courts only have the power to make child maintenance orders where there is a dispute between the parents in very narrowly defined circumstances. The ten per cent in our sample will mostly comprise of consent orders, i.e. private agreements negotiated between the parties, often with input from legal advisers, which are then formally approved by the courts.

previously cohabited (two per cent). This reflects the fact that married couples who separate are more likely to engage with formal legal processes, if only for the purpose of obtaining a divorce. Similarly, the more informal the prior relationship between the parents, the more likely it was that there would be no maintenance arrangement in place at all. Nearly all of those parents who had previously been in casual relationships and who had not seen themselves as a couple, had no arrangement in place (98 per cent), whereas less than half of the formerly married couples (45 per cent) were in the same position.

Table 4.2 Type of current maintenance arrangement for non-CSA PWCs, by nature of previous relationship with ex-partner

	Married couple, previously living together %	Unmarried couple, previously living together %	Unmarried couple, not previously living together %	Not a couple %	Total ¹ %
Court or consent order	20	2	1	0	10
Private arrangement	34	34	12	2	28
Unknown	*	1	0	0	*
No arrangement	45	64	87	98	62
<i>Weighted base</i>	291	170	84	63	614
<i>Unweighted base</i>	291	170	84	63	614

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

¹ Total includes six PWCs who fell outside the four sub-groups shown in the table.

The non-CSA PWC's household income is also an important factor in the likelihood of a maintenance arrangement being in place. Those on the lowest incomes were the most likely to have no arrangement; so eight in ten non-CSA PWCs with an annual gross income of less than £10,000 had no maintenance arrangement, as compared with only half of those with annual gross incomes of £30,000 or more (Table 4.3). Conversely, the use of court or consent orders was directly associated with increasing household income: only two per cent of those non-CSA PWCs in the lowest income bracket had such an arrangement, compared with one in five of those in the top band (20 per cent). Likewise private arrangements were about twice as common among non-CSA PWCs with household incomes of £10,000 or more as against those in the lowest income bracket.

Table 4.3 Type of current maintenance arrangement for non-CSA PWCs, by yearly gross income of non-CSA PWC

	Up to £9,999 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 or more %	Total ¹ %
Court or consent order	2	11	14	20	10
Private arrangement	17	33	36	29	28
Unknown	1	0	1	0	*
No arrangement	80	56	49	51	61
<i>Weighted base</i>	169	206	90	106	571
<i>Unweighted base</i>	169	206	90	106	571

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

¹ Total includes six PWCs who fell outside the four sub-groups shown in the table.

Similarly, and contrary to the popular myth of the 'alimony drone' – the notion that receipt of maintenance is likely to encourage PWCs to stay out of the labour market – previous research has identified a positive association between the PWC's employment status and the receipt of child maintenance (Bradshaw and Millar, 1991). This association was confirmed in the current study, as shown by Table 4.4. Half (49 per cent) of non-CSA PWCs in employment had some sort of maintenance arrangement in place, whether privately or through the court process, as against just under one in six (16 per cent) of those who were not in paid work.

Table 4.4 Type of current maintenance arrangement for non-CSA PWCs, by their working status

	In paid work %	Not in paid work %	Total ¹ %
Court or consent order	14	3	10
Private arrangement	35	13	28
Unknown	*	0	*
No arrangement	51	84	62
<i>Weighted base</i>	435	220	655
<i>Unweighted base</i>	435	220	655

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

¹ Includes working one hour a week or more. However, only 22 respondents worked fewer than 16 hours per week.

4.2.2 CSA clients

CSA clients, whether PWCs or NRPs, were also asked about the current status of their maintenance arrangements. Overall, around four in five (79 per cent) reported that they were receiving or paying child maintenance via the CSA (the current 'Collection Service'), although more CSA NRPs reported payment (89 per cent) than CSA PWCs acknowledged receipt (71 per cent) (Table 4.5). Just over a fifth (21 per cent) of CSA PWCs reported that they should be receiving child maintenance via the CSA but were not. The CSA PWC's status as a benefit or non-benefit case made no significant difference in this respect. However, CSA NRPs on benefits were more likely to report payment via the CSA (94 per cent) than those who were not in receipt of social security (86 per cent), presumably because of the arrangements for direct deduction from benefits. In a minority of cases (six or seven per cent) the CSA had not informed parents about the payments due; these are likely to include new applications which had not been processed fully.

Table 4.5 Type of maintenance arrangement for CSA parents, by PWC and NRP status

	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Pays/receives maintenance via CSA	89	71
CSA informed that NRP should be paying/PWC should receive, but is not	5	21
CSA informed that NRP should be paying/PWC should be receiving, but is unsure if he/she is	*	1
CSA not informed parents about payments and NRP not paying/PWC not receiving	6	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	468	627
<i>Unweighted base</i>	468	629

Base: All CSA parents.

4.3 Reasons for having no arrangement

Non-CSA PWCs without a maintenance arrangement in place were asked why this was so. Their answers are summarised in Table 4.6 (note that respondents could give more than one reason). The most common reason given was that the PWC did not know where the NRP was (30 per cent).

Overall, the reasons given can be seen as falling into four broad categories: First, in many cases the payment of maintenance was seen as **not practicable** (whereabouts of NRP unknown (30 per cent), NRP cannot afford it (17 per cent); also, for example, NRP in prison, unknown or not in contact (three per cent)). Secondly, in at least a fifth of cases maintenance was **not wanted** (PWC prefers not to receive maintenance (22 per cent)). Thirdly, in at least another fifth of cases

the payment of maintenance was seen as **not equitable** (NRP helps informally 21 per cent, NRP shares childcare equally six per cent). Finally, in around one in six cases the payment of maintenance was actively **refused** (NRP refused to pay (16 per cent)). From a policy perspective it is this last group that is most problematic.

We conducted further analysis of the responses given by the third of these groups who said that child maintenance was **not wanted**. The most common reason for this given by non-CSA PWCs was that their ex-partner had been violent (37 per cent); other common reasons were that they had grown apart (24 per cent) or that they argued all the time (22 per cent) (base 67; respondents could give more than one answer).

Looking at the total group of non-CSA PWCs without a maintenance arrangement in place, the reasons given by previously married PWCs for not having a maintenance arrangement in place were broadly the same as the responses of those who had previously cohabited without being married. However, non-CSA PWCs who had been in a long-term relationship but had not lived with their partner were much more likely than those who had lived with the other parent to say that they did not know where the NRP was (37 per cent) or that they did not want maintenance (33 per cent).

Table 4.6 Reasons why no maintenance arrangement in place for non-CSA PWC, by nature of previous relationship with ex-partner

	Nature of previous relationship with ex-partner				Total %
	Married couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, not living together %	Not a couple %	
Don't know where ex-partner is	19	18	37	66	30
I prefer not to receive child maintenance	23	18	33	14	22
Ex-partner helps informally	25	29	14	7	21
Ex-partner cannot afford child maintenance	19	26	11	7	17
Ex-partner said they would not or refused to pay	17	21	14	7	16
Ex-partner is equally involved in childcare	10	6	1	5	6
Waiting for an agreement/order to be made	2	3	1	0	2
Don't want contact with ex-partner	2	2	1	3	2
Ex-partner is in prison	1	2	1	2	1
Not sure who ex-partner is	0	0	1	5	1
No contact with ex-partner	0	0	3	5	1
Other reason given	9	5	4	10	7
No reason given	2	4	1	0	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	129	108	73	58	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	129	108	73	58	372

Base: All non-CSA PWCs with no maintenance arrangement.

As well as looking at the reasons that non-CSA PWCs gave for not having a maintenance arrangement in the light of their past relationship with their ex-partner, their reasons were also examined in the context of their current relationship status. The results are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Reasons why no maintenance arrangement in place for non-CSA PWC, by nature of current relationship status

	Non-CSA PWC: does not have partner in household %	Non-CSA PWC: does have partner in household %	Total %
Don't know where ex-partner is	32	14	29
I prefer not to receive child maintenance	19	38	22
Ex-partner helps informally	23	13	21
Ex-partner cannot afford child maintenance	18	11	17
Ex-partner said they would not or refused to pay	15	19	16
Ex-partner is equally involved in childcare	5	14	6
Don't want contact with ex-partner	2	2	2
Waiting for an agreement/order to be made	2	2	2
Not sure who ex-partner is	2	0	2
Ex-partner is in prison	2	0	1
No contact with ex-partner	2	0	1
Other reason given	6	14	7
No reason given	2	2	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>374</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>374</i>

Base: All non-CSA PWCs with no maintenance arrangement.

Non-CSA PWCs who are now lone parents are more likely to say that they do not have a maintenance arrangement in place because they do not know where their ex-partner is (32 per cent) or because he helps them in another way (23 per cent) when compared with non-CSA PWCs who have a new partner (14 per cent and 13 per cent respectively). However, those who have re-partnered are much more likely to say that they have no arrangement in place because they prefer not to receive maintenance (38 per cent, compared with 19 per cent of those who are lone parents). These findings emphasise the significant impact that both past and present relationship status have on the likelihood of maintenance arrangements being put in place.

It is interesting to compare the reasons given in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 with those given in the study of lone parents by Bradshaw and Millar (1991), which preceded the Child Support Act 1991. In that research, similar proportions of respondents said that they did not want child maintenance (20 per cent), the absent parent could not afford payments (14 per cent; although 15 per cent also referred to the absent parent being unemployed) or that there had been a refusal to pay (11 per

cent): Bradshaw and Millar, Table 7.2, p.80. So, the size of the **not practicable**, **not wanted** and **refused** groups were broadly comparable. The main difference is the emergence of the substantial **not equitable** category, which did not appear in Bradshaw and Millar's typology of reasons (unless these cases fell within the nine per cent of 'other' reasons in 1991). It is true, of course, that the 1991 study was focused on lone parents, whereas this research has questioned separated parents (who may be lone parents or have re-partnered) although there may be some overlap in terms of the sampling. But our research does suggest that NRPs – at least where they had previously lived with their ex-partner – may be now more involved in providing indirect support or childcare after relationship breakdown than was the case nearly 20 years ago. If so, this poses new challenges for developing a framework for child maintenance which is perceived to be fair by all parents.

4.4 Maintenance levels and methods of payment

This section considers the amounts of maintenance payable by (or to) each of the three main groups of separated parents, as well as methods of payment and the extent of changes to private agreements. Compliance issues are considered in more detail in Section 4.8.

4.4.1 Maintenance levels

Parents who were party to a maintenance arrangement with their ex-partner were asked how much maintenance was being paid. Previous research has shown that levels of child maintenance tend to be higher in private arrangements than under CSA orders, although in large part this reflects the socio-economic composition and other characteristics of the different constituent. The CSA is also required by legislation to apply a set formula in carrying out maintenance calculations (subject to the variations regime), whereas private parties have a broad discretion in setting maintenance levels. The finding of generally higher levels of maintenance in private arrangements was confirmed in our study (see Table 4.8). Half (51 per cent) of CSA PWCs received £30 a week or less in child maintenance. In contrast, fewer than one in five (18 per cent) of non-CSA PWCs fell into this category. Low levels of payment were concentrated among CSA PWCs on benefits: around a third of this group (34 per cent) received £5 a week or less in child maintenance, while about a further quarter (24 per cent) received between £5 and £10 a week. At the other end of the spectrum, one in ten (10 per cent) non-CSA PWCs received over £120 a week in child maintenance as against just two per cent of CSA PWCs.

The mean weekly amount of child maintenance received was £69 for non-CSA PWCs, almost twice that for CSA PWCs (£38.40 a week). The latter figure is broadly consistent with the mean weekly liability reported in the official CSA statistics (£35.00 a week as at December 2007: DWP, 2008: Table 15a). The mean payment of child maintenance by CSA NRPs was £42.30 a week.

Table 4.8 Weekly amount of maintenance received or paid, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
£0.01-£5.00	1	16	18	34	9
£5.01-£10.00	1	5	10	24	3
£10.01-£20.00	8	7	9	7	10
£20.01-£30.00	8	14	14	11	16
£30.01-£40.00	12	13	14	8	17
£40.01-£50.00	17	16	10	7	12
£50.01-£60.00	9	7	8	3	11
£60.01-£70.00	12	7	6	2	8
£70.01-£80.00	4	5	3	1	4
£80.01-£90.00	5	2	2	1	3
£90.01-£100.00	4	3	2	0	3
£100.01-£110.00	5	1	*	0	*
£110.01-£120.00	5	1	1	0	1
£120.01 and above	10	3	2	1	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>394</i>	<i>403</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>260</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>403</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>275</i>

Base: All parents where maintenance is in payment.

The relationships were explored between the reported amounts of maintenance and several of the key variables in our study. Earlier research has shown that the nature of the parties' previous marital status has an effect on maintenance levels, and this was confirmed in our study. In particular, previously married couples tended to have higher amounts of maintenance in payment. So about a third of CSA PWCs (34 per cent) who had been married reported maintenance of more than £50 a week, compared to one in five of those who had been unmarried but had lived together (19 per cent) and one in six of those who had been unmarried and not lived together (16 per cent): see Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Weekly amount of maintenance received by CSA PWCs, by nature of previous relationship with ex-partner

	Married couple, previously living together %	Unmarried couple, previously living together %	Unmarried couple, not previously living together %	Total ¹ %
£0.01-£5.00	12	17	28	18
£5.01-£10.00	7	11	16	10
£10.01-£20.00	7	12	12	9
£20.01-£30.00	11	16	11	14
£30.01-£40.00	13	16	13	14
£40.01-£50.00	15	10	4	10
£50.01-£60.00	12	6	3	8
£60.01-£70.00	8	4	4	6
£70.01-£80.00	4	2	3	3
£80.01-£90.00	3	3	1	2
£90.01-£100.00	4	1	1	2
£100.01-£110.00	0	1	0	*
£110.01-£120.00	1	0	1	1
£120.01 and above	2	2	3	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>174</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>403</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>406</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs where maintenance is in payment.

¹ Total includes 26 PWCs who fell outside the three sub-groups shown in the table.

There was no obvious association between the levels of maintenance in place and the friendliness or otherwise of the current relationship between the separated parents. For example, 37 per cent of CSA PWCs with a friendly relationship with their ex-partner (weighted base 132) and 34 per cent of those with an unfriendly relationship (weighted base 116) reported maintenance of less than £20 a week.

As anticipated, however, there was a positive association between the respondents' yearly gross income and maintenance levels. Inevitably the association was particularly strong for CSA NRPs. For example, three-quarters of CSA NRPs with gross incomes of under £10,000 a year paid £20 or less a week in child maintenance (and around half paid £5 a week or less (53 per cent)). Only one in ten CSA NRPs with gross yearly incomes in excess of £30,000 paid £20 a week or less in maintenance. Conversely, only four per cent of CSA NRPs in the lowest income bracket paid more than £60 a week in child maintenance, as against about a third (35 per cent) of those in the highest yearly income band (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Weekly amount of maintenance paid by CSA NRPs, by yearly gross income of CSA NRP

	Up to £9,999 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 or more %	Total %
£0.01-£5.00	53	9	7	4	16
£5.01-£10.00	12	6	1	3	5
£10.01-£20.00	10	6	9	3	7
£20.01-£30.00	8	18	14	13	14
£30.01-£40.00	7	19	9	6	12
£40.01-£50.00	5	16	21	24	17
£50.01-£60.00	2	4	7	12	6
£60.01-£70.00	1	12	7	9	8
£70.01-£80.00	0	5	9	5	5
£80.01-£90.00	0	1	5	6	3
£90.01-£100.00	2	2	1	5	2
£100.01-£110.00	0	*	0	3	1
£110.01-£120.00	0	0	7	0	2
£120.01 and above	1	2	2	7	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	68	122	77	82	349
<i>Unweighted base</i>	72	117	85	85	359

Base: All CSA NRPs where maintenance is in payment.

The comparable results for CSA PWCs are shown in Table 4.11. These demonstrate that more than half of CSA PWCs with a yearly gross income of less than £10,000 (57 per cent) received at most £20 a week in child maintenance. This compares with about three in ten CSA PWCs with yearly incomes of £30,000 or more (31 per cent). The positive association between low income and low maintenance levels is more marked in Table 4.10 than in Table 4.11. This is to be expected, as one would anticipate a stronger correlation between CSA NRPs' incomes and the levels of maintenance payments (Table 4.10), given the nature of the assessment system. The association is not as strong for CSA PWCs, as their incomes are not factored into the child support formula. However, given the strong likelihood that parents form relationships with partners from similar socio-economic backgrounds, PWCs on low incomes would be expected to be in receipt of lower amounts of child support, as shown by Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Weekly amount of maintenance paid by CSA NRPs, by yearly gross income of CSA PWC

	Up to £9,999 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 or more %	Total %
£0.01-£5.00	30	14	6	15	18
£5.01-£10.00	18	4	5	10	10
£10.01-£20.00	9	7	13	6	9
£20.01-£30.00	11	17	17	10	14
£30.01-£40.00	11	15	14	19	14
£40.01-£50.00	8	12	12	12	11
£50.01-£60.00	6	11	12	4	8
£60.01-£70.00	3	7	6	9	6
£70.01-£80.00	2	5	3	0	3
£80.01-£90.00	1	4	0	5	3
£90.01-£100.00	1	1	8	1	2
£100.01-£110.00	0	1	0	0	*
£110.01-£120.00	1	0	1	3	1
£120.01 and above	1	2	3	6	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>382</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>385</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs where maintenance is in payment.

The pattern for non-CSA PWCs was broadly similar to that for CSA PWCs as displayed in Table 4.11. A separate table for this group has not been included, as the base in some of the sub-groups was too low to merit inclusion.

The relationship was also explored between the amount of maintenance and whether or not the NRPs were having contact with their children. Figure 4.1 shows the relationship between the weekly amount of maintenance received by CSA PWCs according to their reports of whether or not contact was being exercised. This shows that nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) of those CSA PWCs with the lowest awards (£0.01 to £5) also reported no contact. Conversely, in broad terms levels of maintenance in payment tend to be higher where some form of contact arrangement is in place.³² However, as indicated in Chapter 3, the association between maintenance and contact is a complex one. Contact involving overnight stays with the NRP can affect the maintenance calculation (under the new scheme formula the amount is reduced if children stay over for at least 52 nights a year). However, liability is not affected by overnight stays of less than 52 nights a year,

³² No similar chart for non-CSA PWCs has been produced as only four PWCs in this group reported that maintenance was being paid in the absence of any contact arrangement.

or by other types of contact, such as phone calls or meetings without overnight stays. As such, there may be other factors that explain the relationship between contact and maintenance levels that is seen here.

Figure 4.1 Weekly maintenance amount by prevalence of contact

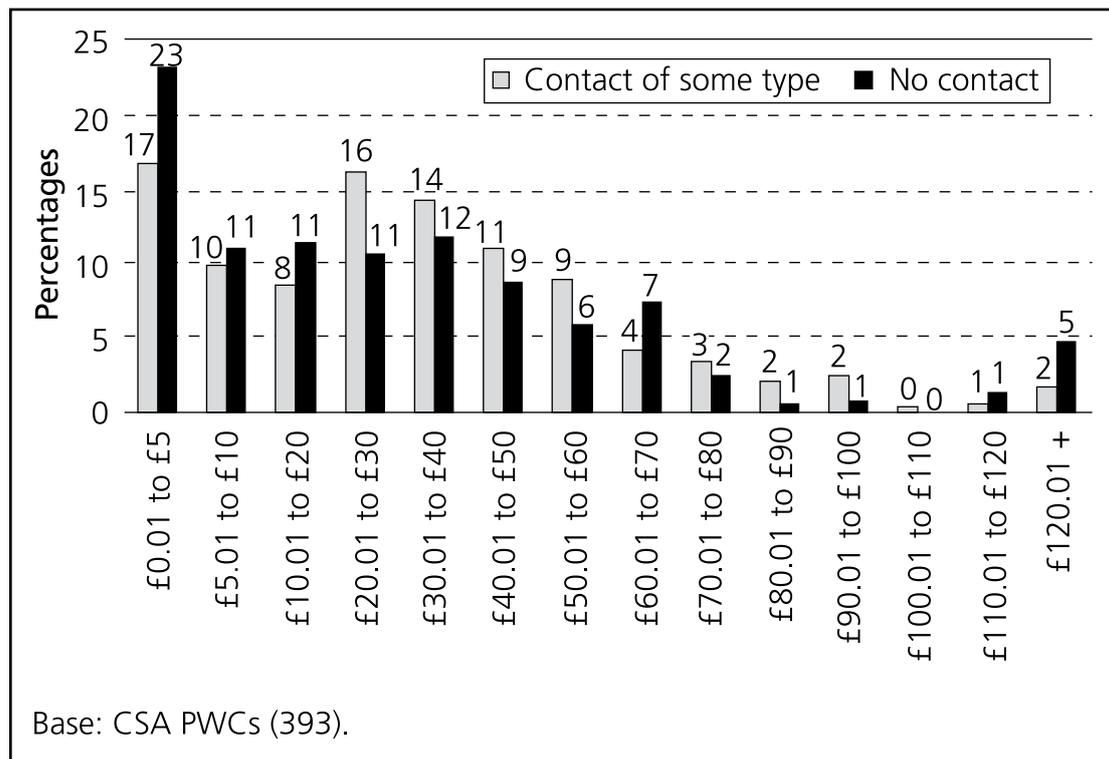
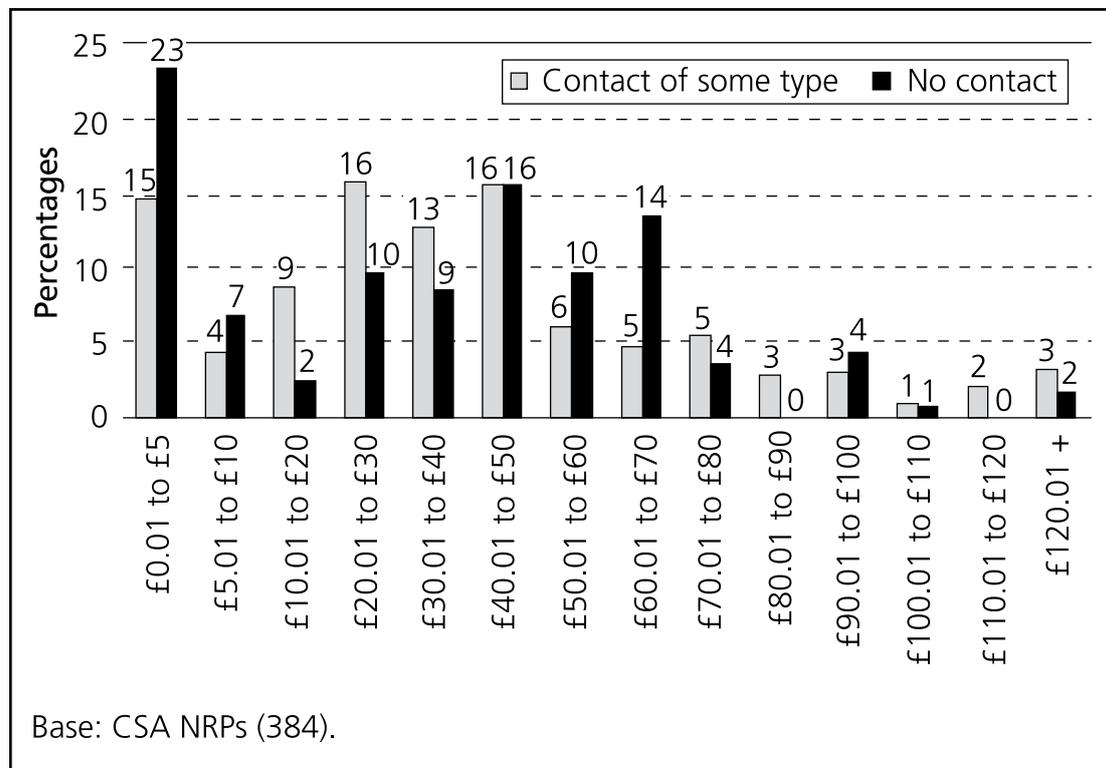


Figure 4.2 shows the relationship between the weekly amount of maintenance according to CSA NRPs' reports of whether or not contact was being exercised. The proportions of CSA NRPs who exercise some form of contact with their children and who fall in each weekly band of maintenance are very similar to those reported by CSA PWCs in Figure 4.1. However, the distribution by maintenance level band of those CSA NRPs who do not have contact is not the same as for CSA PWCs. This may reflect reporting differences or it may be that CSA NRPs who do not have contact and are aggrieved by that fact, were more likely to participate in the study.

Figure 4.2 Weekly maintenance amount by prevalence of contact

4.4.2 Maintenance: methods of payment

Parents who were receiving or paying maintenance were asked how it was being paid. Their answers are shown in Table 4.12. The most common form of payment was by bank transfer or direct deductions from salary: nearly eight in ten CSA clients referred to this payment method (78 per cent of CSA PWCs, 77 per cent of CSA NRPs). Non-CSA PWCs were twice as likely to be paid in cash or by cheque (34 per cent) than CSA PWCs (17 per cent). It should be noted that the 'cash or cheque' responses by CSA NRPs (17 per cent) refer to the manner of payment by the respondent to either the CSA or the former partner. The data do not disclose whether CSA NRPs were making direct cash payments to CSA PWCs rather than the CSA. That said, further analysis confirmed that cash payments were more likely among CSA clients where the parents remained on friendly terms and also became less common the longer the time that had elapsed since the separation. However, no significant differences were found with the non-CSA PWCs in this respect.

Table 4.12 Method of maintenance payment/receipt, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Cash or cheque	34	17	17
Bank transfer or direct deduction from pay	64	77	78
Other	1	5	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	222	417	432
<i>Unweighted base</i>	222	427	434

Base: All parents where maintenance is in payment.

4.4.3 Maintenance: changes to private agreements

One potential advantage of private arrangements is their relative flexibility in accommodating changing circumstances (for example, a sudden loss of, or reduction in, income on the part of the NRP). One possible weakness, however, is that they may not be adjusted over time in the light of increased income or inflation. Parents who were party to a private maintenance arrangement with their ex-partners were asked whether there had ever been any subsequent changes to that agreement. Almost two-thirds of non-CSA PWCs (64 per cent) with a private agreement reported that there had been no change to the arrangement since it was first made. As shown by Table 4.13, although 39 per cent of such agreements had so far lasted less than two years, a similar proportion (41 per cent in all) had lasted for more than four years.

Table 4.13 Duration of private child maintenance arrangement for those that have had no changes

	Non-CSA PWCs %
Less than a year	20
More than one year, less than two years	19
More than two years, less than four years	20
More than four years, less than six years	11
More than six years, less than eight years	15
More than eight years, less than 12 years	8
More than 12 years, less than 14 years	4
More than 14 years	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	106
<i>Unweighted base</i>	106

Base: All non-CSA PWCs with a private arrangement that has not been changed.

A further fifth of non-CSA PWCs with a private agreement (19 per cent) stated that there had only been one change to the arrangement. Any changes that were made were overwhelmingly in relation to the amount payable under the agreement rather than the frequency or method of payment.

4.5 Views on payment level

4.5.1 Fairness of child maintenance level

Parents were asked whether they regarded the amount of child maintenance being paid as fair, as seen in Table 4.14. Non-CSA PWCs were much more likely (particularly if they had been married previously rather than cohabiting) to say the amount was fair (62 per cent) than CSA PWCs (42 per cent), reflecting the fact that the former were more likely to be on better terms with their ex-partner than those PWCs who had had to use the CSA and were, on average, receiving more money each week. No significant differences were found in perceptions of fairness between benefits cases and private cases among CSA PWCs.

CSA NRPs were more likely to regard the amount of maintenance as fair (63 per cent) than CSA PWCs (42 per cent). It should be noted that in 2001 a slight majority of CSA NRPs regarded their assessment as unfair (Wikeley *et al.*, 2001: 69-70). This implies that the 2003 reforms have, to some extent, succeeded in improving CSA NRPs' overall perceptions of the fairness of child support awards. However, further analysis of the present data revealed that CSA NRPs whose former partners were on benefits were more likely to take this view (70 per cent) than those whose ex-partners were not on benefits (57 per cent). This is likely to reflect both the lower amounts being paid in benefits cases and the more difficult relations between former partners in CSA non-benefit cases.

Table 4.14 Views on fairness of amount of child maintenance, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Yes, fair amount	62	63	42
No, not fair amount	38	37	58
<i>Weighted base</i>	217	413	417
<i>Unweighted base</i>	217	423	419

Base: All parents where maintenance in payment.

4.5.2 Affordability of child maintenance level

As well as perceptions of fairness, parents were also asked about their views on affordability. The answers are shown in Table 4.15. As expected, the proportion of CSA PWCs regarding the amount of child maintenance as easily affordable by

their ex-partner (88 per cent) was much higher (nearly three times higher) than the proportion of CSA NRPs (32 per cent) who thought the amount easily affordable by themselves. Clearly, if CSA PWCs are more likely to perceive the level of award as unfair (as being too low), they are much more likely to regard it as affordable for their ex-partner. Earlier research has also shown that CSA NRPs tend to be better off than PWCs but are more likely to take a pessimistic view of their overall financial situation (Wikeley *et al.*, 2001: 35). Further analysis also revealed that CSA PWCs who were non-benefit clients were more likely to regard the amount as affordable (96 per cent) than those CSA PWCs on benefits (76 per cent). This is likely to reflect the fact that non-benefit clients (and their ex-partners) inevitably tend to be on higher incomes than benefits cases.

Table 4.15 Views on affordability of amount of child maintenance, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Yes, easily affordable	89	32	88	76	96
Yes, affordable with difficulty	11	49	9	19	3
No, not easily affordable	0	18	3	5	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	214	412	411	156	255
<i>Unweighted base</i>	214	421	411	142	269

Base: All parents where maintenance is in payment.

4.6 Discussions about finance

4.6.1 Do parents discuss financial issues?

Only a minority of parents discussed financial matters, including child maintenance payments, with their ex-partners (26 per cent of CSA PWCs and 22 per cent of CSA clients). As expected, those who had previously lived together were more likely to have such discussions than those who had not cohabited. Again, as anticipated, discussions about financial issues between the parties were much more common where there was some child contact arrangement in place. In general terms the longer the period since separation, the less likely such discussions were to take place. For example, three in ten CSA PWCs (30 per cent) who had been separated for between 12 months and two years had such discussions, compared to just one in ten (11 per cent) who had been separated for ten years or more (Table 4.16).

Table 4.16 Frequency of financial discussions between CSA PWCs and ex-partners, by time since separation

	Time since separation						Total ¹ %
	0-12 months %	More than 12 months and up to two years %	More than two years and up to four years %	More than four years and up to six years %	More than six years and up to ten years %	More than ten years %	
Yes, discuss financial matters with ex-partner	[39]	30	23	21	19	11	22
No, do not discuss financial matters with ex-partner	[61]	70	77	79	81	89	78
<i>Weighted base</i>	22	58	167	130	134	51	603
<i>Unweighted base</i>	20	56	162	132	142	56	606

Base: All CSA PWCs.

¹ Total includes 38 PWCs (weighted base 42) who fell outside of the six sub-groups shown in the table as either they had not been a couple or they were still a couple but living separately.

4.6.2 Frequency and ease of financial discussions

Table 4.17 shows the frequency of financial discussions between the parties in those cases where they did take place. Around half of all these separated parents said that such financial discussions took place not very or not at all frequently (59 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 48 per cent of CSA PWCs and 52 per cent of CSA NRPs). The differences in the responses of non-CSA PWCs and CSA PWCs were not statistically significant.

Table 4.17 Frequency of financial discussions with ex-partner in last six months, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very or fairly frequently	41	48	52
Not very or not at all frequently	59	52	48
<i>Weighted base</i>	161	101	138
<i>Unweighted base</i>	161	96	136

Base: All parents who discuss financial issues with ex-partners.

Parents were also asked how easy it was to discuss financial matters, including child maintenance payments, with their ex-partners. Among those who had such discussions, over half of the CSA NRPs (57 per cent) described this as very or fairly easy, as compared with around a quarter (24 per cent) of CSA PWCs (Table 4.18). Obviously this reflects the inherent power imbalance in a relationship in which one party is asking the other for money. However, non-CSA PWCs tended to find it easier to discuss financial matters with their ex-partners than CSA PWCs (45 per cent as compared with 24 per cent). This reflects both their better all-round relationships with their former partners and their stronger negotiating position. Differences in responses between CSA PWCs on benefits and not on benefits respectively, as to the ease or otherwise of such discussions, were not significant.

Table 4.18 Ease of present financial discussions with ex-partner, where such discussions already occur, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very or fairly easy	45	57	24
Neither easy nor difficult	12	11	13
Fairly or very difficult	43	32	63
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>138</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>136</i>

Base: All parents who discuss financial issues with ex-partners.

Parents who never discussed finances with their ex-partners were asked to envisage how easy it would be if they had to do so (see Table 4.19). The differences apparent in Table 4.18 above are not mirrored here – at least four in ten parents in each group thought that this would be **very** difficult (with all CSA clients having similar views irrespective of their status). In keeping with other findings in this report, this was particularly the case for CSA PWCs who were not on benefits (61 per cent). These findings have obvious implications for any strategy that seeks to encourage greater use of private agreements over child maintenance in terms of the support that parties may need.

Table 4.19 Ease of future financial discussions with ex-partner, where such discussions do not occur now, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Very easy	11	7	4	5	3
Fairly easy	15	14	11	13	10
Neither easy nor difficult	13	12	11	16	7
Fairly difficult	18	18	19	20	19
Very difficult	44	49	55	46	61
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>434</i>	<i>363</i>	<i>484</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>278</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>434</i>	<i>367</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>299</i>

Base All parents who do not discuss financial issues with ex-partners

4.6.3 Financial discussions with children

Only a minority of parents said that they discussed child maintenance issues with their children (18 per cent of both non-CSA and CSA PWCs and 15 per cent of CSA NRPs). As expected, such discussions were rather more common with teenage children than younger children.

4.7 Informal support payments and purchases

4.7.1 Do NRPs provide informal support?

In addition to asking about formal, regular child maintenance arrangements, parents were asked if any informal support was provided. This covered money paid to the PWC (other than child maintenance) or given directly to children, as well as purchases of goods or services for the PWC or children. More non-CSA PWCs (58 per cent) reported receiving such informal support than CSA PWCs (46 per cent). There was a marked disparity between CSA clients as to the reporting of the provision of informal support: three-quarters of CSA NRPs (75 per cent) claimed to provide informal support whereas fewer than half of the CSA PWCs (46 per cent) acknowledged receipt of such assistance (Table 4.20). To some extent this may reflect a tendency for the CSA NRP sample to include a higher proportion of the more involved and compliant members of the NRP population. To the extent that both sample groups are comparable, it may reflect differences between PWCs and NRPs as to both the perception and reporting of informal support. PWCs may regard informal support as trivial or be reluctant to acknowledge such assistance; conversely, NRPs may be anxious to assert their continued parental involvement with their children (see also Bradshaw *et al.*, 1999: 84, on differential reporting of contact).

Table 4.20 Provision of informal support by NRP, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs	CSA NRPs	CSA PWCs
	%	%	%
Informal support provided	58	75	46
No informal support provided	41	25	52
Not sure if informal support provided	1	*	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>467</i>	<i>625</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>467</i>	<i>627</i>

Base: All parents.

It is sometimes argued that the existence of the statutory child support machinery has led to a substitution effect: in other words, child support payments have replaced, but not supplemented, informal payments. Looking just at the responses of PWCs, Table 4.20 above might be thought to support this analysis. However, the position is rather more complex than this, as it is important to explore, in more detail, the combination of support options available, i.e. child maintenance alone, informal support alone, both forms of support together and neither form of support. The results are shown in Table 4.21. Certainly non-CSA PWCs were less likely to report receipt of child maintenance alone (six per cent as against 35 per cent of CSA PWCs) and CSA PWCs were less likely to report receipt solely of informal support (ten per cent as against 25 per cent of non-CSA PWCs). However, about a third of each group reported receipt of both formal payments and informal support (32 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 34 per cent of CSA PWCs). CSA PWCs who were not on benefits were more likely (38 per cent) to receive both types of help than those on benefits (29 per cent). In addition, twice as many non-CSA PWCs (37 per cent) reported receiving no assistance of any sort as compared with CSA PWCs (18 per cent) (on the reasons why some private cases have no maintenance arrangement in place, see Section 4.3, and on reasons for non-payment and late payment, including applications still being processed, see Section 4.8.2).

One-third of all PWCs received both child maintenance and informal support, whether they were covered by the CSA or not. A higher proportion of CSA PWCs than non-CSA PWCs received just child maintenance (and conversely for informal support).

Table 4.21 Provision of informal support and/or child maintenance, by status of PWC

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Only child maintenance received	6	35	34	36
Only informal support received	25	10	12	9
Both child maintenance and informal support received	32	34	29	38
Neither child maintenance or informal support received	37	18	18	17
Other	0	2	6	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	601	625	255	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	601	627	232	395

Base: All PWCs.

4.7.2 Amounts and frequency of informal support

Those parents who did pay or receive some additional money over and above their child maintenance payments, were asked how much this had been in total since their arrangements were originally set up. Half of the CSA PWCs (51 per cent) reported that they had received no more than £50 in total in such extra payments, as compared with one in five (19 per cent) of the non-CSA PWCs (Table 4.22). Conversely, the mean amount received by non-CSA PWCs in extra payments since the breakdown of the relationship was £490 compared with £139 by CSA PWCs.

Table 4.22 Amount of informal support provided by NRP since child maintenance arrangement first set up, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
£0 - £50	19	14	[51]
£51 - £100	26	21	[22]
£101 - £200	21	22	[15]
£201 - £400	11	14	[7]
£401 - £600	13	13	[2]
£601 or more	11	15	[3]
<i>Weighted base</i>	102	91	50
<i>Unweighted base</i>	102	90	49

Base: All parents where informal support provided.

The distribution of payments reported by CSA NRPs was much closer to that for non-CSA PWCs than for CSA PWCs. For example, the mean amount that CSA NRPs said that they had paid to their ex-partners was £446, far exceeding the mean amount reported by CSA PWCs. Only 14 per cent of CSA NRPs admitted to paying less than £50 by way of extra support. The differences between the two CSA groups may indicate that the NRP group comprises the more compliant NRPs.

4.7.3 Types of informal support and purchases

In those cases in which NRPs had bought goods or services directly for the PWC or the children, all parents were asked to describe the nature of the support provided. The most common categories of goods purchased, as reported by all three groups of parents, were clothes or shoes (including school uniform), birthday or Christmas presents and toys, games or books (see Table 4.23). In each case CSA NRPs were more likely to report such purchases, followed by non-CSA PWCs and then CSA PWCs. Assistance with costs with childcare, mortgages or other household bills was uncommon.

Table 4.23 Types of informal support and purchases, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Clothes or shoes (including school uniform)	68	79	59
Birthday or Christmas presents	64	74	55
Toys, games or books	42	62	38
Activities/outings/socialising	36	47	16
Pocket money	29	47	19
Food	26	46	17
Holidays	22	25	15
School trips	17	21	10
Mobile phone	16	20	5
Substantial items (bike, TV etc.)	13	27	4
Transport	12	20	3
Savings account for child	10	15	4
Mortgage, bills	6	4	2
Childcare	2	6	0
Something else	8	7	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	259	276	200
<i>Unweighted base</i>	259	286	193

Base: All parents where informal support provided

4.8 Compliance

4.8.1 Compliance levels

Those parents who had some type of maintenance arrangement in place were asked whether they had received or paid any child maintenance since that arrangement was set up. The answers are shown in Table 4.24. Nearly all non-CSA PWCs (95 per cent) reported at least one payment of maintenance, as compared with 88 per cent of CSA PWCs and 96 per cent of CSA NRPs (see also Section 4.8.2 on reasons for non-payment and late payment, including applications still being processed).

Table 4.24 Receipt or payment of any child maintenance since arrangement set up, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Child maintenance paid	95	96	88
Child maintenance not paid	5	4	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	234	436	495
<i>Unweighted base</i>	234	440	496

Base: All parents with maintenance arrangement in place.

The great majority of non-CSA PWCs (84 per cent) reported that the full amount had been paid. Both sets of CSA parents were asked whether the amount that had been paid in child maintenance was the same as had been assessed or was a different amount. In about three-quarters of cases the amount was the same (77 per cent of CSA NRPs and 73 per cent of CSA PWCs). However, in about one in five cases a different amount had been paid (19 per cent of CSA NRPs and 18 per cent of CSA PWCs) (Table 4.25). The length of the questionnaire meant it was not feasible to ask respondents why the amounts were different.

Table 4.25 Whether amount of child maintenance paid the same as that assessed, by PWC and NRP status

	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Same amount paid as assessed	77	73
Different amount paid than assessed	19	18
Don't know	4	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	417	434
<i>Unweighted base</i>	427	436

Base: All CSA parents with maintenance arrangement in place.

As expected, the quality of the PWC's relationship with the ex-partner was associated with the likelihood of maintenance being paid. For example, nearly all (96 per cent) CSA PWCs with a very or quite friendly relationship with their ex-partner had received maintenance, as compared with 83 per cent of those who had a poor relationship with the other parent (Table 4.26).

Table 4.26 Receipt or payment of any child maintenance since arrangement set up as reported by CSA PWCs, by quality of current relationship with ex-partners

	Very or quite friendly %	Neither friendly nor unfriendly %	Not very or not at all friendly %	No current contact %	Total %
Child maintenance paid	96	86	83	82	88
Child maintenance not paid	4	14	17	18	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	146	131	149	70	495
<i>Unweighted base</i>	136	130	160	70	496

Base: All CSA PWCs with maintenance arrangement in place.

Non-CSA PWCs were also much more likely to report regularity of payment, as shown by Table 4.27. Nine in ten (91 per cent) non-CSA PWCs reported regular payments (i.e. payments received on most occasions at least) as compared with six in ten (59 per cent) CSA PWCs – although nine in ten (88 per cent) CSA NRPs reported having made regular payments. Conversely, only nine per cent of non-CSA PWCs reported that they had only been paid maintenance on some occasions or had never been paid, as against 41 per cent of CSA PWCs (see further Section 4.8.2). As noted, CSA NRPs reported much better compliance rates than CSA PWCs. It is unclear how far this reflects the nature of the CSA NRP sample and how far it is a function of reporting differences between the two groups (there are also known reporting issues resulting in some respondents wrongly reporting that they have no maintenance arrangement in place: see Bullen, 2007: 31).

Table 4.27 Regularity of payment of child maintenance since arrangement set up, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Child maintenance paid regularly	91	88	59
Child maintenance paid irregularly	9	12	41
<i>Weighted base</i>	223	467	608
<i>Unweighted base</i>	223	467	609

Base: All parents where maintenance is in payment.

The regularity or otherwise of child maintenance payments had a direct and marked association with relations between the parties. For example, among CSA PWCs, just over a third of those with regular payments (36 per cent; weighted base: 286) said maintenance caused tension, as compared with two-thirds (66 per cent; weighted base: 161) of those with irregular payments.

Parents were also asked about the timeliness of payments and in particular about how often payments were late (Table 4.28). Eight in ten (81 per cent) non-CSA PWCs reported that payments were never late compared to just one in five (21 per cent) CSA PWCs. Again, there was a notable divergence between the reporting by the two groups of CSA parents as regards lateness of payments, with around half of CSA NRPs (53 per cent) saying that payments were never late.

Table 4.28 Timeliness of payment of child maintenance since arrangement set up, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Payment late on every occasion	2	20	28
Payment late on almost every occasion	1	2	10
Payment late on most occasions	*	6	12
Payment late on some occasions	16	19	29
Payment never late	81	53	21
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>247</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>252</i>

Base All PWCs parents where maintenance in payment.

4.8.2 Reasons for non-payment and late payment

Only the reasons for non-payment and late payment for CSA PWCs are reported, as the numbers of non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs answering these questions were too small.

The three most common reasons cited by CSA PWCs for their ex-partners not paying child maintenance were that the ex-partner did not want to pay (58 per cent); there had been problems with the CSA (36 per cent); and their ex-partner was unemployed (18 per cent) (Table 4.29; respondents could give more than one answer).

Table 4.29 Reasons for non-payment of child maintenance arrangement according to CSA PWCs

	CSA PWCs %
Ex-partner doesn't want to pay	58
Problems with the CSA processing the payment	36
Ex-partner is unemployed	18
Ex-partner doesn't like paying through the CSA	10
Changes to ex-partner's financial circumstances	10
Do not want an arrangement	7
The CSA cannot trace ex-partner	5
Disagreements about contact with the children	4
My financial circumstances have changed	2
Disagreements about the amount of child maintenance	2
Ex-partner has moved abroad	1
Ex-partner has been ill/injured	1
Other	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>166</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>167</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs where arrangement in place but no maintenance received.

The three most common reasons cited by CSA PWCs for late payment of child maintenance were problems with the CSA processing the payment (43 per cent); the ex-partner did not want to pay (35 per cent); and changes to their ex-partner's financial circumstances (24 per cent) (Table 4.30; respondents could give more than one answer).

Table 4.30 Reasons for late payment of child maintenance arrangement according to CSA PWCs

	CSA PWCs %
Ex-partner doesn't want to pay	35
Problems with the CSA processing the payment	43
Changes to ex-partner's financial circumstances	24
Ex-partner doesn't like paying through the CSA	7
Ex-partner has been ill/injured	5
Disagreements about contact with the children	4
No payments received	3
Problems with ex-partner's employment processing the payment	3
Ex-partner cannot pay	2
Changes to my financial circumstances	1
Disagreements about the amount of child maintenance	1
Ex-partner forgets	1
Ex-partner has had problems setting up payments at the bank	1
Other	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>182</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>181</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs where arrangement in place but maintenance received late.

4.8.3 Acceptability of receiving less than full amount

One of the advantages of private maintenance arrangements, especially for NRPs, is their flexibility, in that the parties can agree some 'give and take'. The statutory child support scheme is very different – CSA child maintenance orders are (in principle at least) absolute and cannot be compromised. At present the CSA has no powers to write off liabilities, however the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Bill is currently before Parliament and will enable NRPs to settle their debts by a part-payment in certain circumstances.

During the interview non-CSA PWCs and CSA PWCs who were not on benefit and were owed money by their ex-partners were asked how willing they would be to accept a lower amount than the full amount owed. The difference between the two groups was stark – 78 per cent of non-CSA PWCs were prepared to settle for a reduced amount in payment of a child support debt as opposed to just 40 per cent of CSA PWCs. PWCs who were prepared to accept a reduced payment were then asked how much they would settle for. Most of them were realistic about reaching a compromise figure. Three-quarters of non-CSA PWCs (76 per cent) and two-thirds of CSA PWCs (67 per cent) were willing to settle for exactly 50 per cent of the amount of arrears in settlement of the total debt (see Table 4.31).

Table 4.31 How much respondent would be willing to accept as percentage of total debt, by status of PWC

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA PWCs %
25 per cent or less of total debt	10	14
26 per cent to 49 per cent of total debt	2	4
50 per cent	76	67
51 per cent to 75 per cent of total debt	8	8
76 per cent to 100 per cent of total debt	4	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	50	67
<i>Unweighted base</i>	50	69

Base: All non-benefit case PWCs owed arrears and willing to accept a reduced payment in settlement.

As well as asking those PWCs who were not on benefits but who were owed arrears whether they would be willing to accept a compromise sum in settlement, those who were not owed arrears were asked whether they thought they would be likely to accept a reduced sum in the hypothetical situation that there was a child maintenance debt (see Table 4.32). Overall, at least half were willing to contemplate accepting a reduced amount.

Table 4.32 Whether non-benefit case PWC hypothetically owed arrears of child maintenance would be likely to agree to reduced amount in settlement, by status of PWC

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA PWCs %	Total %
Very likely	11	8	10
Likely	46	42	45
Unlikely	18	20	19
Very unlikely	25	30	26
<i>Weighted base</i>	531	162	693
<i>Unweighted base</i>	531	172	703

Base: All non-benefit case PWCs not currently owed arrears.

4.9 Non-Child Support Agency non-resident parents

As explained in Section 1.4, the limited size of the sample of non-CSA NRPs means that they have not been included in the comparative analysis in the rest of this chapter. Here, the key findings from the non-CSA NRPs are briefly summarised.

Just over half (51 per cent) of non-CSA NRPs had a private maintenance arrangement with their ex-partners, whilst almost a quarter (23 per cent) were subject to a court or consent order. Only 25 per cent had no maintenance arrangement at all in place. Of this latter group, the three most common reasons given for the absence of any arrangement were that they helped informally (49 per cent), could not afford to pay maintenance (27 per cent), or were equally involved with the children (24 per cent). Of those paying maintenance, only 18 per cent paid £130 or less a month while 15 per cent paid £520 a month or more. (The relevant proportions of non-CSA PWCs receiving these amounts were 18 per cent and ten per cent respectively).

Nearly all (98 per cent) of the non-CSA NRPs had paid the full amount of child maintenance since the arrangement had been established. A similar proportion (97 per cent) had made regular payments. Almost as many (89 per cent) thought that the amount involved was fair and only seven per cent said they could not afford it. These findings further reflect the particular nature of this sample. Most of this group (69 per cent) paid child maintenance by bank transfer. In addition, more than nine in ten (93 per cent) non-CSA NRPs provided some form of informal support.

Just over a third (36 per cent) of non-CSA NRPs discussed financial matters with their ex-partners; of these, a similar proportion (38 per cent) had done so fairly or very frequently in the previous six months, and over half (55 per cent) described such discussions as fairly easy or very easy. Among those who had not had such discussions with their ex-partners, almost half (48 per cent) thought that it would be fairly or very difficult to do so. Overall, however, only about one in six (16 per cent) described maintenance as a source of tension between themselves and their ex-partners. Only one in ten (ten per cent) discussed child maintenance with their children.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter, a number of issues were explored which were associated with the financial arrangements in place between ex-partners for the maintenance of the children after relationship breakdown. Some of the chapter's key findings are outlined below.

Maintenance arrangements for non-CSA PWCs:

- Around six in ten non-CSA PWCs had no maintenance arrangement at all; about three in ten had a private arrangement in place and one in ten were subject to a court order or consent order.
- One in five non-CSA couples who had lived together as a married couple were subject to a court order or consent order, as compared with just one in 50 couples who had previously cohabited.

- Virtually all of those parents who had previously been in casual relationships, and who had not seen themselves as a couple, had no maintenance arrangement in place.
- About half of non-CSA PWCs in employment had some sort of maintenance arrangement in place, as against around one in six of those who were unemployed.
- Three in ten non-CSA PWCs were without a maintenance arrangement because they did not know where the NRP was.
- The three most common reasons for the absence of a maintenance agreement was because it was not practicable, not wanted or not equitable – only in around one in six cases was the payment of maintenance sought but actively refused.

Maintenance arrangements for CSA clients:

- Around four in five CSA clients reported that they were receiving or paying child maintenance via the CSA.

Maintenance levels, reliability and methods of payment:

- The mean weekly amount of child maintenance received was £69 for non-CSA PWCs, almost twice that for CSA PWCs (£38.40 a week). The mean payment of child maintenance by CSA NRPs was £42.30 a week.
- Half of CSA PWCs received £30 a week or less in child maintenance, compared with one in five non-CSA PWCs.
- One in ten non-CSA PWCs received over £120 a week in child maintenance, as against just one in 50 CSA PWCs.
- Nearly all PWCs with a child maintenance arrangement in place reported at least some payment of child maintenance.
- Nine out of ten non-CSA PWCs reported regular payments of child maintenance as compared with about six out of ten CSA PWCs.
- The most common form of payment was by bank transfer, including direct deductions from salary – but non-CSA PWCs were more likely to be paid in cash than CSA PWCs.

Perceptions of fairness and discussions over finances:

- Around six out of ten non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs regarded the amount of child maintenance in payment as fair; only about four out of ten CSA PWCs took the same view.
- Only a minority of parents (fewer than three in ten) discussed financial matters, including child maintenance payments, with their ex-partners.

- Over half of CSA NRPs described having financial discussions with their ex-partner as fairly or very easy, as compared with about a quarter of CSA PWCs.
- At least four out of ten parents who did not currently discuss financial matters with their ex-partner thought that it would be very difficult to do so.

Maintenance and informal support:

- Three-quarters of CSA NRPs claimed to provide informal support, whereas less than half of the CSA PWCs acknowledged receipt of such assistance.
- About a third of non-CSA PWCs and CSA PWCs alike reported receipt of both formal payments of child maintenance and informal support.
- The most common categories of goods purchased, as reported by all three groups of parents, were clothes or shoes (including school uniform), birthday or Christmas presents and toys, games or books.

Maintenance arrears

- About eight out of ten non-CSA PWCs who were currently owed child maintenance were prepared to settle for a reduced amount in payment of that debt, as opposed to just four out of ten CSA PWCs – among those PWCs who were prepared to accept a reduced payment, most were willing to accept half of the amount of arrears in settlement.

5 Attitudes towards child maintenance and the role of non-resident parents

5.1 Introduction

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 have provided a detailed description of separated families in terms of their socio-demographics, their previous relationships, the level and type of contact between members of the separated families and their financial arrangements. To some degree, the chapters report on the association between these various factors (e.g. looking at how the quality of the separated parents' relationships, their contact arrangements, etc.) are associated with the types of financial arrangement that they have. However, it is known from this study and others (e.g. Bell *et al.*, 2006) that the interaction of these factors can often amount to more than the sum of their parts. In other words, it would be helpful to be able to look at the profile of separated families taking many of these different factors into account at the same time.

5.1.1 Plan of chapter

The first part of this chapter describes how this was attempted, using Latent Class Analysis (LCA). It talks through the different factors that were used to group separated families and describes the five 'types' of separated families which emerged from the data. (Full details of the analysis can be found in the Appendix.) It mentions how this typology has been used in subsequent chapters of this report.

The second part of this chapter reports on the attitudes of separated parents towards child support and towards the roles of non-resident parents (NRPs). Although, of course, it is not possible to establish cause and effect between parents' attitudes towards these issues and their behaviour (around contact, finances, etc.), it is, nevertheless, important and interesting to know what parents

think. Underlying attitudes may be important facilitators or barriers to parents finding workable arrangements under the new child support system. To this end, the chapter reports on variations in the attitudes of separated parents – not only between Child Support Agency (CSA) and non-CSA parents with care (PWCs) and CSA NRPs, but also between the five types of families as described in the earlier sections.

As with the preceding chapters, the views of non-CSA NRPs are reported separately, in Section 5.4.

5.2 Typology of separated families

5.2.1 Constructing the typology

A typology of separated families using a short list of variables³³ about the families' relationships, their contact arrangements and their lines of communication around financial arrangements, was constructed. These variables were:

- marital status prior to break-up;
- friendliness of the relationship between the ex-partners;
- frequency of the NRP's contact with their children;
- happiness with their level of contact;
- flexibility of the contact arrangements;
- whether the contact arrangements were a source of tension;
- main or shared caring;
- whether maintenance was a source of tension;
- ease with which ex-partners discussed financial matters.

The aim of this approach was to classify separated families into different groups according to various elements of the quality of their relationship. Because it was planned that the typology would be used in order to try to understand families' financial arrangements (type, reliability, etc.) and their likely reactions to the new child support arrangements, whether or not they had child maintenance arrangements in place was not included. Also, because the aim was to develop a typology of separated families rather than separated parents (which could then be used to analyse the responses of both PWCs and NRPs), the choice of variables was restricted to ones that could be said to be measuring the relationship, rather than simply the views of one parent.

The data from these variables was analysed using LCA, a statistical approach used to categorise individuals into different classes or types according to their responses

³³ See the Appendix for a discussion of the long list of variables and the decisions for inclusion on the shortlist.

to a series of questions. After examining several models with different numbers of clusters or types, it was decided that a model with five types was the 'best fit' to the data (see the Appendix).

The number of cases assigned to each type ranged from 277 ('Happy with contact') to 14 ('Contact with children but not with partner') (see Section 5.2.2 for a description of the types). The sample size for the latter type was small, however, a five-cluster model was chosen because, though small, the 'Contact with children but not with partner' was identified as a distinct group, interesting in policy terms.

5.2.2 The typology

The five 'types' of separated families are described below. Note that, for simplicity, the 'labels' focus largely on the contact variables, which appear to be the primary drivers in most types.

Type 1: Happy with contact

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting);
- friendly relationship with ex-partner;
- frequent contact with children;
- happy with their level of contact;
- flexible contact arrangements;
- contact arrangements not a source of tension;
- PWC usually the main carer, with some sharing;
- maintenance not really a source of tension;
- fairly easy to discuss financial matters.

Type 2: No contact at all

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- likely not to have been living together;
- no contact with ex-partner;
- no contact with children;
- relatively happy with level of contact;
- no contact arrangements (flexibility, therefore, not applicable);
- no contact arrangements (tension, therefore, not applicable);
- PWC always main carer;
- no contact with ex-partner (tension, therefore, not applicable);

- very difficult (or potentially very difficult) to discuss financial matters.

Type 3: Unhappy with contact

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- likely to have been living together (mainly married);
- not very friendly relationship with ex-partner;
- infrequent contact with children;
- unhappy with level of contact;
- less flexible contact arrangements;
- contact arrangements frequently a source of tension;
- PWC almost always main carer – little sharing;
- maintenance often a major source of tension;
- very difficult to discuss financial matters.

Type 4: No face-to-face contact

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting);
- not very friendly relationship with ex-partner;
- no contact with children (or non-physical contact only, e.g. phone);
- unhappy with level of contact;
- no contact arrangements (flexibility, therefore, not applicable);
- contact arrangements frequently a major source of tension;
- PWC always main carer;
- maintenance often a major source of tension;
- quite difficult to discuss financial matters.

Type 5: Contact with children but not with ex-partner

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting);
- not very friendly relationship with ex-partner;
- relatively frequent contact with children;
- relatively happy with level of contact;
- relatively flexible contact arrangements (or don't know);

- no contact with ex-partner (tension, therefore, not applicable);
- PWC usually main carer – sometimes information unknown;
- no contact with ex-partner (tension, therefore, not applicable);
- very difficult (or potentially very difficult) to discuss financial matters.

Table 5.1 shows how the three parent groups fall into the five types of families.

Table 5.1 Typology of separated families, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Happy contact	45	41	32	52	33	42	26
No contact	28	19	23	14	22	24	22
Unhappy contact	16	21	25	19	22	16	31
No face-to-face contact	9	15	16	11	17	15	17
Contact with children	2	5	4	3	6	4	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	616	469	627	204	265	258	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	616	468	629	169	299	234	395

Base: All parents.

More parents fell into the 'happy contact' type (arguably the 'best' arrangement of the five options) than fell into any other type. Although it was the largest type for all parent groups, a greater proportion (52 per cent) of CSA NRPs who were part of a benefit case fell into this type than of any other parent group. Conversely, CSA parents who were not part of benefit cases (both NRPs (33 per cent) and PWCs (26 per cent)) were least likely to fall into this group.

CSA PWCs who were not on benefits were more likely than other parents to be in the 'unhappy contact' group. They were twice as likely (31 per cent compared to 16 per cent) as their CSA PWC benefit counterparts. They were significantly more likely to be in the 'unhappy contact group' than either the non-CSA PWCs (16 per cent) or the CSA NRPs (21 per cent).

CSA parents were more likely than non-CSA PWCs to be in the 'no face-to-face' type (15 per cent of NRPs and 16 per cent of PWCs compared to nine per cent of non-CSA PWCs).

Whilst these are important findings in their own right, it is also interesting to look at these five types of families (within each of the parent groups) to understand parents' responses to a number of key issues. The next part of this chapter, Section 5.3, looks at separated parents' attitudes towards child support and the role of NRPs. In this, the five types are used to better understand the variation

in responses between different parents. They are also used to see what kinds of families predictably end up with different types of maintenance arrangements (Section 5.2.3) and are likely to fare better under the new child support arrangements (Chapter 7).

5.2.3 The maintenance arrangements of the five 'types' of separated family

Chapter 4 reported on the financial arrangements of separated families. The typology described above can be used to enlighten some of the results in Chapter 4, namely to describe the extent to which the maintenance arrangements of families differ according to the quality of their contact arrangements and relationships. Tables 5.2 to 5.4 show the variation in the types, in terms of whether there were formal and/or informal arrangements in place. The variation in the maintenance arrangements across the five types is quite marked.

For non-CSA PWCs, being in either the 'happy' or 'unhappy contact' types meant that the ex-partner was very likely to be providing informal payments, either alongside formal maintenance (49 per cent and 44 per cent respectively) or as the sole source of financial support (37 per cent and 36 per cent respectively). For these parents, being in the 'no contact at all' type meant that it was very unlikely that they were being paid any money (be it maintenance or informal support) at all (95 per cent were paid nothing).

For CSA PWCs, being in either the 'happy' or 'unhappy' contact types meant that the ex-partner was very likely to be paying formal maintenance, either alongside informal support (57 per cent and 44 per cent respectively) or on its own (30 per cent and 26 per cent respectively). Those in the 'no face-to-face contact' type were more likely to rely on formal maintenance only (44 per cent) and more likely than the 'happy' and 'unhappy contact' types to be receiving no financial support (26 per cent compared to two per cent and 11 per cent). The contrast between the financial circumstances of CSA and non-CSA PWCs in the 'no contact at all' group is striking. Whilst only five per cent of non-CSA PWCs in this group received any financial support, 60 per cent of CSA PWCs did, mainly in the form of formal maintenance.

CSA NRPs in the 'happy' or 'unhappy' contact types were very likely to report that they were providing both formal and informal financial support (88 per cent and 87 per cent said so). Whilst those in the 'no contact at all' type were unlikely to report providing informal support only (three per cent did so), the majority (77 per cent) said that they were paying formal maintenance.

Table 5.2 Maintenance payments among non-CSA PWCs, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact only with children %
Receives formal maintenance only	7	2	8	6	[14]
Receives informal support only	37	2	36	26	[14]
Receives both	49	1	44	19	[43]
No payments at all	7	95	12	49	[29]
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>14</i>

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Table 5.3 Maintenance payments among CSA PWCs, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact only with children %
Receives formal maintenance only	30	50	26	44	[33]
Receives informal support only	11	1	19	10	[10]
Receives both	57	9	44	20	[18]
No payments at all	2	40	11	26	[39]
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>179</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>27</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs.

Table 5.4 Maintenance payments among CSA NRPs, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact only with children %
Pays formal maintenance only	7	62	4	22	[19]
Pays informal support only	4	3	7	6	[18]
Pays both	88	15	87	66	[63]
No payments at all	*	21	2	6	[0]
<i>Weighted base</i>	192	88	98	67	21
<i>Unweighted base</i>	178	80	108	74	27

Base: All CSA NRPs.

To explore further how families within these five types sorted out their maintenance arrangements (between having formal only, informal only, both or none), regression models were carried out to predict the likelihood of each family type having each type of arrangement. Full details of the regression models can be found in the Appendix. In the regressions, variables were included around re-partnering, working status, household poverty, benefit receipt, the age and number of children, the age of the mother and the distance between the separated families. The regressions supported the findings above. Even after accounting for variation in these socio-demographics, the findings remain³⁴. However, it is worth noting that, among non-CSA PWCs, NRPs' working status was significantly associated with the likelihood of having particular arrangements, even after taking into account the five family types. Those whose ex-partners were working were more likely to be paid both formal and informal support, and less likely to be paid only informal support or paid nothing at all.

5.3 Attitudes of separated parents towards child support

Parents were asked what they thought about a range of issues to do with child support and the role of NRPs. Most of the questions asked parents to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements, using a five-point scale. Ostensibly, the questions can be grouped into the following topics, each of which are discussed in the following sections:

³⁴ Although the cross-tabular percentages are cited in the tables, all highlighted results were significant in the regression tables.

- attitudes towards the principle of child maintenance obligation;
- what the relationship should be between contact arrangements and child maintenance;
- what the relationship should be between re-partnering and child maintenance obligations;
- the extent to which either party's income should influence the amount of child maintenance to be paid;
- the extent to which informal support should alter the amount of child maintenance to be paid.

5.3.1 Attitudes towards the principle of child maintenance obligation

Separated parents were asked three questions about the general principle that a NRP should pay child maintenance: First, they were asked a broad question, namely the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement:

'When a couple separates the NRP should pay towards the upkeep of his or her children.'

Their responses are shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 When a couple separates the NRP should pay towards the upkeep of his or her children, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	59	43	78	46	40	70	84
Agree	30	47	19	45	49	25	14
Neither agree nor disagree	9	7	1	7	8	2	1
Disagree	2	2	1	2	1	2	*
Strongly disagree	1	1	1	0	2	2	0
Mean	1.6	1.7	1.3	1.7	1.8	1.4	1.2
<i>Weighted base</i>	647	479	627	209	270	255	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	647	478	629	173	305	232	397

Base: All parents.

Not surprisingly, very few separated parents thought that the NRP did not have any obligation to pay child maintenance (i.e. disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement). However, PWCs had stronger views (i.e. were more likely to agree strongly) about this principle than NRPs. CSA PWCs (particularly non-benefit cases) were the most likely to 'strongly agree' with the statement (78 per cent), followed by non-CSA PWCs (59 per cent), compared to 43 per cent of CSA NRPs. These findings resonate with those of MacLean and Eekelaar (1997) who found that (mostly female) PWCs were much more likely to say that child maintenance obligations were absolute, whilst (mostly male) NRPs were more likely to view them as conditional.

Following on from this, parents were asked to assess the extent to which the issue of 'blame' played a part in NRPs' obligation to pay child maintenance. Again with a five point scale, they were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement that (Table 5.6):

'If a NRP was not to blame for a separation, he or she should not have to pay child maintenance.'

Table 5.6 If a NRP was not to blame for a separation, he or she should not have to pay child maintenance, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	1	5	1	7	4	2	1
Agree	5	13	4	10	16	4	3
Neither agree nor disagree	13	18	6	16	20	6	7
Disagree	59	50	49	54	47	53	47
Strongly disagree	22	13	39	13	13	35	42
Mean	4.0	3.5	4.2	3.6	3.5	4.1	4.3
<i>Weighted base</i>	644	474	626	206	268	254	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	644	473	627	170	303	230	397

Base: All parents.

Only minorities of parents thought that a lack of blame in the break-up should mean that a NRP should not pay child maintenance. However, CSA NRPs were more likely than PWCs to think that it should. Eighteen per cent of CSA NRPs agreed or agreed strongly that they should not have to pay under these circumstances, compared to five to six per cent of the PWCs.

The final question that parents were asked along these lines was about whether NRPs should have to pay maintenance if they did not want to have the child in the first place (the law states that they do have a responsibility). Table 5.7 shows parents' responses.

Table 5.7 All parents should pay child maintenance even if they did not want to have a child or have not been in a committed relationship with the other parent, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
They are just as responsible	71	68	82	74	64	78	85
They are only partially responsible	24	26	16	24	28	19	14
They are not responsible at all	5	5	2	2	7	3	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	634	472	622	205	267	253	369
<i>Unweighted base</i>	634	470	623	169	301	230	393

Base: All parents.

Whilst very small numbers of parents (between two and seven per cent) across all groups thought that the NRP should have no responsibility at all, there was variation in support for the idea that they are only partially responsible in these cases. Non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs were more likely to think this than CSA PWCs (24 per cent and 26 per cent compared to 16 per cent). In turn, CSA PWCs were more likely to think that the NRP was just as responsible in these cases (82 per cent compared to 71 per cent and 68 per cent). CSA PWCs who were not benefit cases were the most likely to think the NRP should have normal rights of responsibility.

So, overall, parents' responses to this suite of questions suggests that the majority of separated parents support the idea of an obligation on the part of NRPs to pay child maintenance. However, CSA NRPs display slightly less support, particularly if there are factors that suggest that their status as a NRP was not necessarily 'chosen'.

5.3.2 Attitudes towards the relationship between contact arrangements and child support

Turning now to separated parents' views about the extent to which a NRP's contact arrangements with their children should have any effect on their payment of maintenance. Parents were asked four questions related to this.

The first asked whether they agreed or disagreed that:

'A NRP who is not allowed contact with his or her children should pay less child maintenance.'

Their views are shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 A NRP who is not allowed contact with his or her children should pay less child maintenance, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	6	29	6	25	32	6	5
Agree	25	35	24	32	36	22	25
Neither agree nor disagree	25	15	16	18	13	17	16
Disagree	33	18	32	21	16	34	31
Strongly disagree	10	3	22	3	3	21	23
Mean	3.2	2.3	3.4	2.4	2.2	3.4	3.4
<i>Weighted base</i>	638	470	621	203	267	253	368
<i>Unweighted base</i>	638	470	622	168	302	230	392

Base: All parents.

Maybe not surprisingly, CSA NRPs were more likely to agree with this. Three in ten (29 per cent) agreed strongly, compared to only six per cent of PWCs. In turn, non-CSA PWCs were more supportive of this idea than CSA PWCs (43 per cent disagreed or disagreed strongly compared to 54 per cent).

A second question took an alternative perspective (Table 5.9), namely, asking for agreement or otherwise with the view that:

'A NRP who is paying full maintenance is entitled to have regular contact with his or her children.'

Table 5.9 A NRP who is paying full maintenance is entitled to have regular contact with his or her children, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	32	61	32	60	62	35	30
Agree	41	27	34	29	26	34	34
Neither agree nor disagree	17	8	19	7	8	21	17
Disagree	9	4	10	4	3	8	11
Strongly disagree							
Mean	2.1	1.5	2.2	1.5	1.5	2.1	2.3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>643</i>	<i>477</i>	<i>625</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>254</i>	<i>370</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>643</i>	<i>476</i>	<i>626</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>304</i>	<i>231</i>	<i>395</i>

Base: All parents.

Overall, the majority of parents seemed to place store in the connection between maintenance payments and contact arrangements, agreeing that NRPs paying full maintenance had rights of contact. NRPs were more likely to think this than PWCs. Twice as many CSA NRPs agreed strongly with this statement than PWCs (61 per cent compared to 32 per cent).

In summary, the parents' responses to these two questions imply that whilst most parents perceive a connection between contact arrangements and the payment of child maintenance, the importance of this link is stronger for NRPs, who feel that payment equates with rights of contact and restrictions on contact equate with less of a requirement to pay.

The third and fourth questions in this section tap a slightly different dimension, asking about the relationship between the amount of time that the NRP 'cares' for the children and the amount of maintenance they should have to pay. First, parents were asked whether shared care – in the form of overnight stays with the NRP – should result in a reduction in the amount that the NRP should pay the PWC (under the CSA new scheme, if the child stays 52 nights a year or more, this results in an amendment to the maintenance payable). Table 5.10 shows the proportions of parents who thought that overnight stays should be taken into account.

Table 5.10 When children live with one parent but often stay overnight with the other, this should be taken into account when assessing maintenance payments, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	11	44	10	42	45	9	11
Agree	41	44	37	43	44	34	40
Neither agree nor disagree	18	7	16	7	6	17	16
Disagree	25	5	27	7	4	31	24
Strongly disagree	5	*	10	1	*	10	10
Mean	2.7	1.8	2.9	1.8	1.7	3.0	2.8
<i>Weighted base</i>	637	477	620	208	269	249	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	637	475	622	172	303	227	395

Base: All parents.

Around half of PWCs agreed or agreed strongly that overnight stays should be taken into account (52 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 47 per cent of CSA PWCs). However, the proportion of CSA NRPs who thought that the overnight stays should be taken into consideration was substantially higher, with nearly nine out of ten (88 per cent) thinking that they should.

Parents were also asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement:

'When separated parents share the care of their children roughly equally, the NRP should still be expected to pay child maintenance.'

Table 5.11 shows their responses.

Table 5.11 When separated parents share the care of their children roughly equally, the NRP should still be expected to pay child maintenance, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	8	6	11	5	7	12	11
Agree	42	35	39	38	33	42	37
Neither agree nor disagree	23	15	24	13	17	24	25
Disagree	23	30	22	32	28	18	24
Strongly disagree	3	14	4	13	15	5	3
Mean	2.7	3.1	2.7	3.1	3.1	2.6	2.7
<i>Weighted base</i>	641	476	624	208	268	252	371
<i>Unweighted base</i>	641	474	625	172	302	229	396

Base: All parents.

The level of support for the idea that an NRP with equally shared care should still pay maintenance is perhaps surprising. Half of PWCs (50 per cent) and four in ten (41 per cent) CSA NRPs thought that they should. Perhaps not surprisingly, however, CSA NRPs were also more likely to disagree than PWCs (44 per cent disagreed or disagreed strongly compared to 26 per cent of PWCs).

Again, these two questions show the perceived importance of the link between the amount of contact between NRPs and their children and their maintenance obligations. There was support from many for the idea that maintenance payments should be re-evaluated if the NRP is taking a substantial role in looking after the child. However, PWCs were less supportive of this than NRPs. With the increasing emphasis under the new reforms on encouraging parents to reach private arrangements for child maintenance, this is one area where there is clearly potential for disagreements between parents to undermine the prospects of making private agreements which are sustainable in the long-term.

5.3.3 Attitudes towards the relationship between re-partnering and child support

Parents were asked two questions about the re-partnering of either the PWC or the NRP and the requirement to pay maintenance. As is known from this and other work, re-partnering can be a source of tension, particularly around the level of maintenance that should be paid as a result.

First, considering an NRP who re-partners, parents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement (Table 5.12):

'A NRP who has a child with a new partner should pay less child maintenance for the children of a former partner.'

Table 5.12 A NRP who has a child with a new partner should pay less child maintenance for the children of a former partner, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	2	9	3	8	10	2	3
Agree	11	34	8	31	37	7	8
Neither agree nor disagree	16	20	11	22	18	11	11
Disagree	40	29	39	32	27	38	40
Strongly disagree	32	8	39	7	9	41	37
Mean	3.9	2.9	4.0	3.0	2.9	4.1	4.0
<i>Weighted base</i>	641	477	624	208	269	253	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	641	475	626	172	303	230	396

Base: All parents.

Support for the idea that an NRP with a new child should pay less for their other children was low among PWCs, with the vast majority (more than seven in ten) disagreeing. However, CSA NRPs were more than three times as likely to think (i.e. agree or agree strongly) that having a child in a new relationship should reduce their financial obligation to their other children (43 per cent compared to 13 per cent and 11 per cent).

Parents were also asked to consider the reverse scenario, namely the PWC re-partnering. They were asked whether the income of the new partner should affect the NRP's financial obligations to support their children (Table 5.13):

'If a PWC remarries, he or she should continue to receive child maintenance payments, regardless of his or her new partner's income.'

Table 5.13 If a PWC remarries, he or she should continue to receive child maintenance payments, regardless of his or her new partner's income, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	16	6	31	6	6	26	35
Agree	54	42	52	47	38	53	51
Neither agree nor disagree	17	18	9	20	17	11	8
Disagree	11	23	6	20	26	7	6
Strongly disagree	2	10	1	8	12	2	1
Mean	2.3	2.9	1.9	2.8	3.0	2.1	1.9
<i>Weighted base</i>	641	476	626	208	268	254	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	641	474	628	172	302	231	397

Base: All parents.

PWCs were more likely than CSA NRPs to agree that the NRP's financial obligations would not alter, with CSA PWCs most likely to express this view (83 per cent agreed or agreed strongly, compared to 70 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 48 per cent of CSA NRPs).

Of course, in law, neither party re-partnering alters the financial obligation of the NRP. However, the relatively high proportions of (particularly non-resident) parents who do not necessarily agree with the law do point to some of the potential challenges that will be faced by PWCs under the new child support system.

5.3.4 Attitudes towards the relationship between income and the requirement to pay

Under the original child support scheme both parents' incomes were used in calculating maintenance arrangements. This was changed when the new scheme came into force in April 2003, partly to simplify the formula and partly because the incomes of most PWCs were too low to affect the overall assessment. So the current law states that maintenance levels are calculated on the basis of the income of the NRP (together with the number of children involved). This principle will be retained under the new reformed child maintenance scheme. Parents were asked about their support for this – and for the idea that both parents' incomes are taken into account. Tables 5.14 and 5.15 show the proportion of separated parents who think that maintenance levels should depend (a) on the NRP's income and (b) on both parents' incomes.

Table 5.14 How much child maintenance a NRP pays should depend on his or her income, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	28	31	33	33	29	28	37
Agree	58	44	54	42	45	55	53
Neither agree nor disagree	8	10	7	11	10	11	5
Disagree	5	12	4	11	13	6	4
Strongly disagree	1	3	1	3	4	1	1
Mean	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.0	1.8
<i>Weighted base</i>	645	478	625	208	270	254	371
<i>Unweighted base</i>	645	477	627	172	305	231	396

Base: All parents.

Table 5.15 How much child maintenance a NRP pays should depend on both parents' incomes, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	11	31	8	23	37	12	5
Agree	50	51	34	52	50	37	32
Neither agree nor disagree	14	8	15	13	4	17	14
Disagree	21	7	33	9	5	29	36
Strongly disagree	4	3	10	3	3	5	13
Mean	2.6	2.0	3.0	2.2	1.9	2.8	3.2
<i>Weighted base</i>	644	474	621	207	267	253	368
<i>Unweighted base</i>	644	473	621	171	302	230	391

Base: All parents.

Whilst the vast majority (three-quarters or more) of all separated parents agreed that the NRP's income should affect the level of maintenance, the views of NRPs and PWCs differed more about the extent to which both parents' income should

be taken into account. CSA NRPs were most likely to agree (particularly 'strongly agree') with this (particularly the non-benefit cases), with around eight in ten (82 per cent) agreeing strongly or agreeing. CSA PWCs were the least likely to agree (42 per cent) (particularly the non-benefit cases).

5.3.5 Attitudes towards the relationship between informal support and child maintenance

Finally, parents were asked to think about the role of informal support, both towards the children themselves and towards the PWC's household. Parents were asked whether – if an NRP did provide such informal support – this should affect the amount of child maintenance that they should pay. Table 5.16 shows what parents said in regard to the NRP paying for 'things for their children'. Table 5.17 shows what they said in relation to the NRP paying for 'things for their ex-partner or their household'.

Table 5.16 If a NRP pays for things for their children, should he or she pay..., by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Maintenance as normal	65	40	74	45	36	70	77
Less maintenance	20	40	14	35	45	14	13
No maintenance	3	6	2	5	7	3	1
Depends how much spent	12	14	10	16	13	13	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	639	476	624	209	266	253	371
<i>Unweighted base</i>	639	474	626	173	301	230	396

Base: All parents.

Table 5.17 If a NRP pays for things for the ex-partner or their household, should he or she pay..., by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Maintenance as normal	38	22	46	32	14	50	43
Less maintenance	40	46	38	38	52	33	41
No maintenance	9	19	5	17	20	6	5
Depends how much spent	13	13	11	13	13	11	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	637	477	617	208	269	249	368
<i>Unweighted base</i>	637	475	618	172	303	226	392

Base: All parents.

Separated parents seem to make a distinction between paying for things directly for their children and paying towards things for the wider household. In general, parents were less likely to think that paying for things for the child should have an impact on the amount of formal child maintenance that should be paid than they were in relation to payments for the wider household. For instance, whilst only 14 per cent of CSA PWCs thought that an NRP should pay less maintenance if they paid for things for their children, four in ten (38 per cent) thought this if the additional payments went to the household.

Regardless of the type of informal support, NRPs were more likely than PWCs to think that it should decrease the amount of formal maintenance that should be paid. In turn, CSA PWCs were the least likely to think that it should have an impact. This latter point reflects a general trend whereby CSA PWCs take the obligation to provide a particular level of child maintenance as read, regardless of issues around contact, shared care, informal support and so on.

Again, this is reflected in parents' attitudes towards the following statement (Table 5.18):

'It is better for a NRP to buy things for the children themselves than to pay regular child maintenance.'

Table 5.18 It is better for an NRP to buy things for the children themselves than to pay regular child maintenance, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	5	21	5	17	24	5	5
Agree	14	28	9	28	27	10	8
Neither agree nor disagree	20	23	15	22	24	19	12
Disagree	40	25	39	28	23	35	41
Strongly disagree	21	4	33	5	2	31	34
Mean	3.6	2.6	3.9	2.8	2.5	3.8	3.9
<i>Weighted base</i>	644	478	624	209	269	253	371
<i>Unweighted base</i>	644	476	626	173	303	230	396

Base: All parents.

NRPs were much more likely than PWCs to agree with the idea of paying directly for things for their children rather than paying regular child maintenance. Half of them (49 per cent) agreed or agreed strongly with this compared to only 19 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 14 per cent of CSA PWCs. Again, CSA PWCs were the most resistant to this idea. These findings resonate with those of Bradshaw *et al.* (1999) which showed that non-resident fathers valued having control over how money given to their ex-partners and their children was used.

Given the current uncertainty about how informal support payments will be taken into account within the new child support system, these views are important indicators of parental preferences in this regard.

5.4 The views of non-Child Support Agency non-resident parents

The non-CSA NRPs supported the general idea of child maintenance, with nine in ten agreeing or agreeing strongly that NRPs had an obligation to support their children. There was only minimal support (by around one in ten) for the idea that not being 'to blame' for the separation was a valid reason for not having to pay. Three-quarters felt that an NRP who had not wanted the child should still pay child maintenance.

These NRPs strongly supported the idea that an NRP who is not allowed contact with their child should, therefore, pay less child maintenance. Around two-thirds agreed with this. Conversely, there was a high level of agreement (around nine in ten) with the suggestion that a NRP who is paying full maintenance should be permitted regular contact with their children.

Three quarters of non-CSA NRPs agreed or agreed strongly that frequent overnight stays with the NRP should result in having to pay less child maintenance. However, around half thought that NRPs with shared care should still be required to pay child maintenance.

A fifth of CSA NRPs agreed that an NRP with a new child should pay less child maintenance to their other children. In addition, half felt that the child maintenance should be reduced if their ex-partner re-partnered.

Eight in ten felt that the amount of child maintenance to be paid should be based on the income of the NRP. However, the same proportion felt that both parents' income should be taken into account. Half of these NRPs thought that they should still pay the same amount of child maintenance, regardless of whether or not they paid for additional things for their children. However, if the additional payments were being made to the ex-partner or their household, six in ten felt that their maintenance should be reduced or that they should not have to pay at all. Three in ten thought that it was better for an NRP to buy things for the children themselves rather than pay regular child maintenance.

5.5 Summary

- More parents fell into the 'happy contact' type (arguably the 'best' arrangement of the five options) than fell into any other type. Although it was the largest type for all parent groups, a greater proportion (52 per cent) of CSA NRPs who were part of a benefit case fell into this type than of any other parent group. Conversely, CSA parents who were not part of benefit cases (both NRPs (33 per cent) and PWCs (26 per cent)) were least likely to fall into this group.
- CSA PWCs who were not on benefit were more likely than other parents to be in the 'unhappy contact' group. They were twice as likely (31 per cent compared to 16 per cent) as their CSA PWC benefit counterparts.
- Very few separated parents thought that NRPs did not have any obligation to pay child maintenance. However, PWCs had stronger views about this principle than NRPs. CSA PWCs were the most likely to strongly agree with this principle (78 per cent), followed by non-CSA PWCs (59 per cent), compared to 43 per cent of CSA NRPs.
- Only minorities of parents thought that a lack of blame in the break-up meant that a NRP should not have to pay child maintenance. However, CSA NRPs were more likely than PWCs to think that it did (18 per cent, compared to five to six per cent).

- Very small numbers of parents (between two and seven per cent) across all groups thought that NRPs who had not wanted the child should have no responsibility at all.
- CSA NRPs were more likely to agree with the view that NRPs who are not allowed contact with their child should not be obliged to pay maintenance. Three in ten (29 per cent) agreed strongly, compared to only six per cent of PWCs.
- The majority of parents seemed to place store in the connection between maintenance payments and contact arrangements, thinking that NRPs paying full maintenance had rights of contact. Twice as many CSA NRPs than PWCs agreed strongly with this statement (61 per cent compared to 32 per cent).
- Around half of PWCs thought that frequent overnight stays with the NRP should mean that they paid less in maintenance. However, the proportion of CSA NRPs who thought that the overnight stays should be taken into consideration was substantially higher, with nearly nine out of ten (88 per cent) thinking that this should reduce their maintenance obligations.
- Half of PWCs (50 per cent) and four in ten (41 per cent) CSA NRPs thought that NRPs with shared care should still pay child maintenance.
- Support for the idea that an NRP with a new child should pay less for their other children was low among PWCs, with the vast majority (more than seven in ten) disagreeing. However, CSA NRPs were more than three times as likely to think (i.e. agree or agree strongly) that having a child in a new relationship should reduce their financial obligation to their other children (43 per cent compared to 13 per cent and 11 per cent).
- PWCs were more likely than the CSA NRPs to think that the NRP's financial obligations would not alter if the PWC entered a new relationship, with CSA PWCs most likely to express this view (83 per cent compared to 70 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 48 per cent of CSA NRPs).
- Whilst the vast majority (three-quarters or more) of all separated parents agreed that the NRP's income should affect the level of maintenance, the views of NRPs and PWCs differed more about the extent to which both parents' income should be taken into account.
- Separated parents seem to make a distinction between paying for things directly for their children and paying towards things for the wider household. In general, parents were less likely to think that paying for things for the child should have an impact on the amount of formal child maintenance that should be paid, than they were in relation to payments for the wider household.
- Regardless of the type of informal support, NRPs were more likely than PWCs to think that it should reduce the amount of formal maintenance that should be paid.

- NRPs were much more likely than PWCs to agree with the idea of paying directly for things for their children rather than paying regular child maintenance. Half of them (49 per cent) agreed or agreed strongly with this compared to only 19 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 14 per cent of CSA PWCs.

6 Information and support needs

6.1 Introduction

The information and support needs of separating parents have been a key focus of the policy reforms, with one of the main aims of the reforms being to provide parents with enough information and support to make effective maintenance arrangements between themselves.

6.1.1 Plan of chapter

This chapter looks at the sources of information and support that parents have used in the past and what they think they may use in the future. It also looks at the ways in which parents have received information and support in the past and their preferred methods of accessing information in the future. The final part of the chapter examines the topics that parents have sought information on, and are interested in, in relation to child maintenance issues.

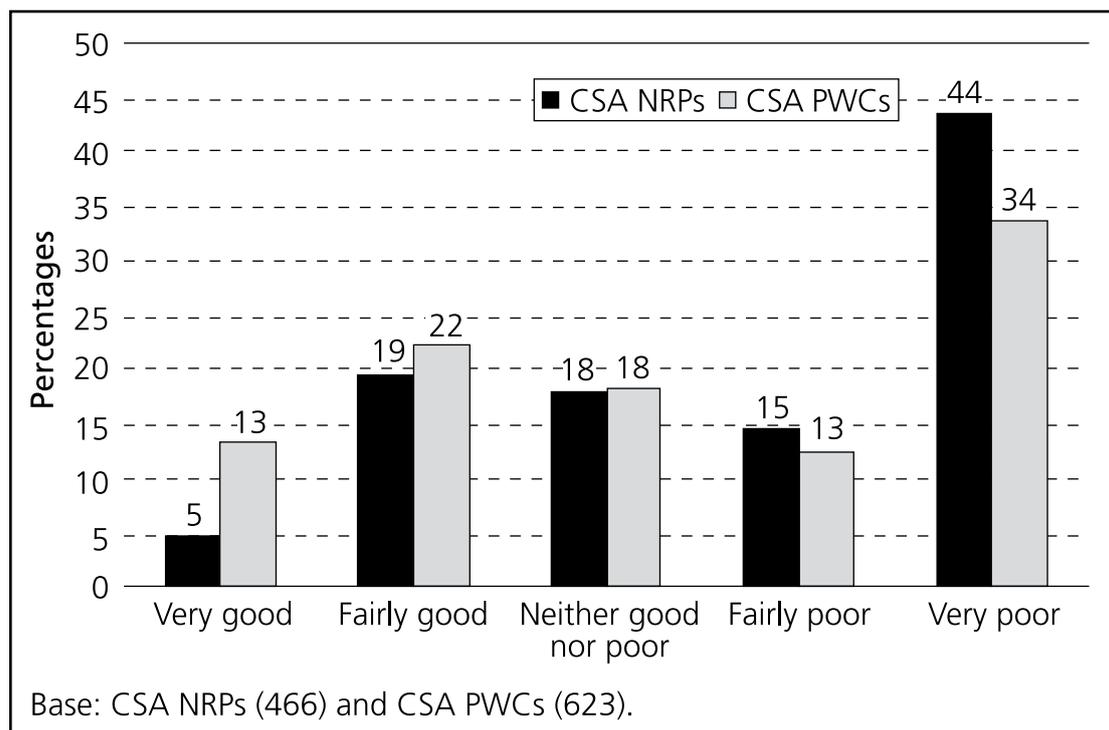
6.2 What did parents think of the Child Support Agency?

The first part of this chapter looks at the role that the Child Support Agency (CSA) has played in providing information and support for parents in the past. Although the CSA is in the process of being replaced by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC), it is still useful to get feedback from CSA clients and those that have not used the CSA, so that lessons can be learned for the implementation of the new organisation, particularly the information and support services that it provides either directly or indirectly by commissioning other agencies to offer such facilities. However, given that parents' contact with the CSA may not have been recent, their views cannot be taken as being views of the current service provided by the CSA.

6.2.1 Views on the service received from the CSA

The quality of the service that CSA clients felt they had received from the CSA is shown in Figure 6.1. Whilst similar proportions of parents (around 15 to 20 per cent in each case) said that they thought the service was fairly good, neither good nor poor or fairly poor, parents were most likely to say that the service they received was very poor (44 per cent of CSA non-resident parents (NRPs) and 34 per cent of CSA parents with care (PWCs)). The CSA PWCs appeared to have had a slightly better experience than the CSA NRPs, with 13 per cent of them saying that the service they had received was very good, compared to only five per cent of CSA NRPs. PWCs in non-benefit cases, however, had felt that they had had a worse experience than those who were on benefits. Thirty-nine per cent of those in non-benefit cases said that they had received a very poor service, compared to 26 per cent of those in benefit cases.

Figure 6.1 Parents' views on the quality of the service received from the CSA



Parents who had said that they thought the service they received from the CSA was fairly or very poor were asked why they thought this. Table 6.1 shows the reasons they gave, broken down by PWCs and NRPs, and also by benefit and non-benefit cases. Some of the most commonly stated reasons were that the CSA was inefficient or took a long time, parents were unable to get answers to their questions and that they were given incorrect or inconsistent information. PWCs, in particular, felt that the service was inefficient:

- Two-thirds of them thought the service overall was inefficient (66 per cent), compared to half of the NRPs (51 per cent).
- More than half thought that the contact with them was infrequent (57 per cent), compared to around a third of NRPs (32 per cent).
- Just under half thought that the CSA had been inefficient in making contact with their ex-partner (48 per cent), compared to around one-sixth of NRPs (16 per cent).

For NRPs, the reasons they found the service offered by the CSA to be poor related more to a lack of empathy for their situation and inaccessible information:

- Six in ten found that the CSA showed a lack of support or understanding (61 per cent) compared to four in ten PWCs (40 per cent).
- Around four in ten thought that staff were rude, unhelpful or incompetent (44 per cent) compared to around three in ten PWCs (32 per cent).
- Nearly a quarter could not understand the answers they were given (24 per cent) compared to 15 per cent of PWCs.

Comparison between benefit and non-benefit cases shows that, for both PWCs and NRPs, a higher proportion of those in non-benefit cases cited many of the reasons given. This, along with the finding above that more PWCs in non-benefit cases thought the service was very poor, suggests that, overall, PWCs in non-benefit cases were more dissatisfied with their experience of using the CSA than those in benefit cases. One explanation may be that the non-benefit cases may have already tried to make their own child maintenance arrangements in the past which had failed, and as a result decided to use the CSA. As such they may have come to the CSA with higher expectations that a maintenance arrangement could be set up than the benefit cases, who may not have even considered maintenance arrangements before their contact with the CSA.

Table 6.1 Reasons why parents thought the service they received from the CSA was poor, by PWC and NRP status

	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Lack of support/understanding	61	40	54	66	34	43
Couldn't get answers to my questions	54	51	44	61	39	57
Inefficiency/things taking a long time	51	66	39	60	50	75
Couldn't speak to the same person every time	50	54	40	57	34	65
Given incorrect/inconsistent information	47	47	46	48	24	58
Staff rude/unhelpful/incompetent	44	32	37	50	22	36
Difficulty getting in contact	37	40	41	34	29	46
Administrative/computer problems	35	37	30	38	23	45
Couldn't understand answers to my questions	24	15	19	27	14	16
Infrequent contact with me	32	57	29	34	54	59
Inefficient in getting in contact with ex-partner	16	48	10	19	37	53
Biased/unfair	7	1	7	7	1	1
Making mistakes with maintenance claims	4	2	5	4	2	2
Unhappy with maintenance level set by CSA	2	*	0	3	1	0
PWC/children not received any maintenance money	*	3	1	0	3	4
Infrequent/irregular maintenance payments	*	3	0	*	3	4
My ex-partner and I did not want/need the CSA to be involved	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other reason	8	3	10	6	3	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>286</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>188</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>281</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>190</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>201</i>

Base: CSA parents who thought the service they received from the CSA was fairly or very poor.

6.2.2 Reasons for not using the CSA

In Section 4.3 the various reasons why some non-CSA PWCs did not have any maintenance arrangements in place were explored. All non-CSA PWCs who had not used the CSA to make child maintenance arrangements were asked to choose reasons from a pre-coded list as to why they had not done so. Their responses are shown in Table 6.2. Overall, the reasons given most often by these parents were:

- that they already had a child maintenance arrangement set up (39 per cent);
- that they did not want to cause friction with their ex-partners (19 per cent);
- that they did not want child maintenance from their ex-partners (19 per cent).

Unsurprisingly, nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) of those non-CSA PWCs receiving maintenance said that the reason that they had not used the CSA for setting up their child maintenance arrangements was that they had already made their own arrangement (compared to around a sixth of those not receiving maintenance). They were also more likely to give a number of reasons that showed a preference for making their own arrangement including: that they thought it was easier to arrange maintenance privately; the bad reputation of the CSA; and that they did not want to involve anyone else (all given by more than 20 per cent of those who received maintenance compared to ten per cent or less of those that did not). Interestingly, the parents who received maintenance were also more likely to say that they did not want to cause friction with their ex-partners (29 per cent compared to 15 per cent of those that did not). As these parents already had a successful child maintenance arrangement in place, it suggests that it was not setting up an arrangement that they were concerned would cause friction, but using a third party such as the CSA.

The most common reason given by non-CSA PWCs who did not receive maintenance for not using the CSA was that they did not want child maintenance (31 per cent). This reflects the findings discussed in Section 4.3. However, there is suggestion of a 'latent demand' among a minority of these parents not receiving maintenance, who said that they did not use the CSA because of its bad reputation (ten per cent), because they did not think their ex-partner would pay (five per cent) and because they were not aware of the CSA (four per cent).

Table 6.2 Reasons parents gave for not having used the CSA, by whether or not received child maintenance

	Received child maintenance %	Did not receive child maintenance %	Non-CSA PWCs %
We had already made our own arrangements	73	16	39
I did not want to cause friction between me and my ex-partner	29	15	19
I didn't want child maintenance from ex-partner (PWC)	1	31	19
It is easier to arrange child maintenance privately	27	7	15
The CSA has a bad reputation	22	10	14
My ex-partner would react badly and take it out on me/child	11	15	13
We did not want anyone else involved	21	9	12
I did not want to upset the children	8	7	8
Ex-partner is abroad or in prison	1	6	4
No point as ex-partner couldn't or wouldn't pay (PWC)	*	5	3
Did not know about CSA/could not find information about it	1	4	3
Father unknown	0	4	2
No contact with ex/don't know where ex is	0	3	2
Advised not to go to the CSA	1	1	1
Tried to use the CSA but they did not respond	*	1	1
Did not want ex-partner to be able to access the child	0	1	*
Other	4	11	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	226	374	650
<i>Unweighted base</i>	226	374	650

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Looking at the reasons shown in Table 6.3 that the five types of separated families gave for not using the CSA, there appears to be some association between face-to-face contact between the NRP and child, such as meeting up and overnight stays, and their reasons for not using the CSA:

- The 'happy contact' type was more likely than the other groups already to have made a private arrangement: 60 per cent of the 'happy contact' type had already made an arrangement compared to 41 per cent of the 'unhappy contact' type, two per cent of the 'no contact at all' type and 28 per cent of the 'no face-to-face contact' type.

- The reasons given by the 'no contact at all' type were a little different. These parents were more likely than the others to say that they did not want child maintenance from their ex-partner: 38 per cent of the 'no contact at all' type did not want maintenance, compared to 21 per cent of the 'no face-to-face contact', 12 per cent of the 'happy contact' type and eight per cent of the 'unhappy contact' type.

Table 6.3 Reasons parents gave for not having used the CSA, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
We had already made our own arrangements	60	2	41	28	[57]
It is easier to arrange child maintenance privately	27	1	15	0	[7]
I did not want to cause friction between me and my ex-partner	25	8	29	13	[29]
We did not want anyone else involved	21	1	10	9	[21]
The CSA has a bad reputation	20	6	15	11	[29]
I didn't want child maintenance from ex-partner (PWC)	12	38	8	21	[7]
I did not want to upset the children	8	7	6	15	[7]
My ex-partner would react badly and take it out on me/child	6	17	26	17	[7]
No point as ex-partner couldn't or wouldn't pay (PWC)	3	2	7	4	[0]
My ex-partner didn't want child maintenance from me (NRP)	1	0	0	2	[0]
Did not know about CSA/could not find information about it	1	5	2	4	[0]
Advised not to go to the CSA	1	0	2	0	[0]
Ex-partner is abroad or in prison	0	11	1	6	[14]
Did not want ex-partner to be able to access the child	0	1	0	0	[0]
Father unknown	0	8	0	2	[0]
Other	5	14	6	9	[7]
<i>Weighted base</i>	279	169	96	53	14
<i>Unweighted base</i>	279	169	96	53	14

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

6.2.3 Use and views of the CSA website

Parents were asked if they had ever used the CSA website. The vast majority had not used it, as Table 6.4 shows. However, CSA clients were three times more likely to have visited it than the non-CSA PWCs (18 per cent compared to six per cent). Parents in non-benefit CSA cases were more likely to have used the website than benefit CSA cases, perhaps because of the voluntary nature of their involvement with the CSA. In addition, CSA PWCs on benefit were more likely to have a lower income and score higher on the household poverty scale than other parents (see Sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.3). As such they were probably less likely to own a computer or have access to the Internet, which they would need in order to use the CSA website.

Table 6.4 Whether or not parents had used the CSA website

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Had used the website	6	18	18	11	23	7	26
Had not used the website	94	82	82	89	77	93	74
<i>Weighted base</i>	652	480	627	210	270	255	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	652	479	629	174	305	232	397

Base: All parents.

The majority of the parents who had used the CSA website had used it to work out the level of maintenance that should be paid (Table 6.5). Seven in ten (71 per cent) CSA NRPs and six in ten (61 per cent) CSA PWCs had used the site to work out how much should be paid (the difference between the two groups was not significant)³⁵. In addition, four in ten (37 per cent) CSA NRPs said that they had consulted the website to work out if they should be paying more or less maintenance.

CSA PWCs had used the website for a wide range of reasons. They were more likely than CSA NRPs to have looked for information on what to do if there are problems with their payments (31 per cent), whether or not they should set up a formal arrangement (22 per cent) and the best way to collect payments 21 per cent (about twice as likely to cite each reason as CSA NRPs).

³⁵ Comparisons were not made with the non-CSA PWCs due to the small base size. Comparisons between benefit and non-benefit cases were also not made for this reason.

Table 6.5 Type of information and support parents sought on the CSA website, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Working out how much to pay/receive	[81]	71	61
What to do if there are problems with child maintenance payments	[17]	15	31
The best way to collect or make child maintenance payments	[12]	7	21
Information on the CSA or support with CSA application/claim	[2]	4	11
Whether I should accept child maintenance payments (PWC)	[2]	0	5
Emotional support	[2]	5	1
Whether I should pay more or less child maintenance (NRP)	[0]	37	0
Whether I should set up a formal child maintenance arrangement	[21]	8	22
Whether I should pay child maintenance (NRP)	[0]	12	0
General information/support about child maintenance	[0]	10	3
Whether I should make a child maintenance arrangement at all	[0]	7	8
To make a complaint/appeal against a decision	[0]	5	10
Other	[0]	4	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	42	85	115
<i>Unweighted base</i>	42	94	120

Base: All parents who had used the CSA website.

The CSA clients were asked how helpful they found the CSA website³⁶. Around six in ten (58 per cent of CSA NRPs and 64 per cent of CSA PWCs) thought that it was very or quite helpful.

6.2.4 Use of solicitors

The majority of parents had not consulted a solicitor in relation to child maintenance in the past: 83 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 85 per cent of CSA NRPs and 84 per cent of CSA PWCs. The CSA NRPs who were in non-benefit cases were more likely to have used a solicitor in the past (nine per cent had compared to four per cent of those in benefit cases). There were no differences between benefit and non-benefit PWCs. Parents who had used a solicitor mostly found it helpful (Table 6.6) (please note the percentage differences between the sample groups are not significant).

³⁶ Given the small proportion of non-CSA PWCs using the CSA website, they were not asked this follow-up question.

Table 6.6 How helpful parents found using a solicitor in relation to child maintenance, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Very or quite helpful	69	49	60
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	19	23	22
Quite or very unhelpful	12	27	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>106</i>

Base: All parents who had consulted a solicitor.

6.2.5 Use of the courts

As reported in Section 4.2.1, one in ten of the non-CSA PWCs were subject to a court order or consent order. Those parents not currently subject to a court or consent order were asked if they had ever had been in the past. Most had not: 97 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 93 per cent of CSA NRPs and 96 per cent of CSA PWCs.

6.3 Where have parents gone in the past for information and support in relation to child maintenance? Where would they turn in the future?

This section examines where parents have turned in the past for information and support in relation to child maintenance issues. It reports on their use of professional services as well as informal support networks of family and friends. The second part of this section examines organisations that parents would consider using in the future.

6.3.1 Sources of information and support used in the past

The professional sources of information and support, apart from the CSA, which parents had used in the past when making decisions about child maintenance are listed in Table 6.7. The two most commonly used services, apart from the use of solicitors discussed in Section 6.2.4, were a Jobcentre Plus or New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) Adviser (both probably approached in relation to employment as well as maintenance) and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), though there were large differences in the use of these services by PWCs and NRPs. Jobcentre Plus or NDLP Advisers were most likely to have given information and support to the two groups of PWCs – with nearly half (49 per cent) of the CSA PWCs and one in three (29 per cent) of the non-CSA PWCs having used them, compared to only three per cent of the CSA NRPs. In contrast, nearly half of the CSA NRPs (48 per cent) had turned to the CAB in the past, compared to less than half this proportion of the

two groups of PWCs (18 per cent of the non-CSA PWCs and 21 per cent of the CSA PWCs). Comparison between benefit and non-benefit cases shows that CSA benefit PWCs were more likely to have consulted a Jobcentre Plus or NDLP Adviser (61 per cent) than non-benefit cases (37 per cent).

Table 6.7 Sources of information and support used in the past, by PWC and NRP status³⁷

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
Jobcentre Plus/NDLP Adviser	29	3	49	61	37
CAB	18	48	21	12	30
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)	10	10	7	9	4
Social Services or social worker	10	6	10	12	9
Health visitor/GP	7	0	8	8	8
Relate	6	7	1	0	1
One parent families	4	5	6	7	5
Family mediation helpline	4	10	1	0	2
Fathers advice/support group	0	8	1	0	1
Gingerbread	2	3	2	0	3
Parentline Plus	2	1	1	0	2
Church/spiritual leader	0	3	1	0	2
Women's aid	1	0	1	1	2
MP	0	1	*	0	1
Other mediator	10	11	2	2	3
Other organisation (apart from the CSA)	7	7	4	3	5
None	14	13	9	3	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>201</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>109</i>

Base: All parents who had received information and support in the past apart from those who had only received it from family and friends.

6.3.2 Future use of information and support

Most parents would consider turning to a professional organisation in the future if they needed help and guidance with child maintenance issues and CSA clients were the most likely to say that they would seek help. Seventy-seven per cent of

³⁷ The percentages and bases for this table are different to Table 4.1 in the interim report (Kazimirski and Ireland, 2007) because it does not include use of solicitors who are instead discussed in Section 6.2.4.

CSA NRPs and 82 per cent of CSA PWCs, compared to 65 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, said that they would turn to an organisation in the future.

The organisations that parents thought they would turn to in the future were similar to those they had most commonly used in the past and were chosen from a pre-coded list, shown in Table 6.8:

- Around half of parents said they would use the CAB in the future and CSA NRPs were the most likely to consider turning to them (59 per cent). However, higher proportions of both PWC groups would also consider using them in the future (46 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 48 per cent of CSA PWCs) compared to the small proportion who had used them in the past (18 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 21 per cent of CSA PWCs).
- The CSA or a similar Government organisation was popular among all parents, particularly CSA PWCs, over half of whom mentioned that they might use such an organisation in future (55 per cent) compared to around two-fifths of the other parents (42 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 38 per cent of CSA NRPs).
- Solicitors were also a source of information and support that many parents thought they may use in the future and were mentioned by around two-fifths of non-CSA PWCs (41 per cent) and CSA NRPs (40 per cent) and a third of CSA PWCs (33 per cent).
- Around a fifth of the two PWCs groups also mentioned a Jobcentre Plus or NDLP Adviser (18 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 21 per cent of CSA PWCs). However, considering the proportion of CSA PWCs who had used an adviser of this kind in the past (49 per cent), the proportion who said they would use one in the future is quite small (though many would have previously used them for employment, as well as maintenance, issues). Jobcentre Plus or NDLP Advisers were popular sources of future information among CSA PWCs in benefit cases (36 per cent mentioned them compared to ten per cent of those in non-benefit cases). CSA NRPs were less likely to use this kind of adviser in the future, with only six per cent indicating that they might.

Table 6.8 Sources of information and support parents may use in the future, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
CAB	46	59	48	51	46
CSA/Government organisation	42	38	55	51	58
Solicitor/lawyer	41	40	33	31	35
Jobcentre Plus/NDLP Adviser	18	6	21	36	10
CAFCASS	10	14	12	10	14
One parent families	8	4	10	12	9
Social services or social worker	5	9	6	8	5
Family mediation helpline	5	3	0	*	1
Health visitor/GP	4	2	7	7	7
Gingerbread	3	2	2	2	1
Relate	3	3	1	1	*
Parentline Plus	2	2	4	4	3
Church/spiritual leader	2	1	*	*	1
Women's aid	1	1	*	1	*
Fathers advice/support group	*	14	1	1	1
Other organisation	2	3	1	1	*
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>401</i>	<i>368</i>	<i>511</i>	<i>213</i>	<i>297</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>401</i>	<i>354</i>	<i>514</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>318</i>

Base: All parents who thought they might need information and support in the future.

6.3.3 The role of support from family and friends

Of all those parents who had received some form of information and support in the past, family and friends were the group they turned to most commonly. Six in ten PWCs (64 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 63 per cent of CSA PWCs) and seven in ten CSA NRPs (71 per cent) had received information and support from them in the past. In fact, around a third of parents who had received information and support in the past had only got this from family and friends (33 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 39 per cent of CSA NRPs and 32 per cent of CSA PWCs).

6.4 How have parents received information and support in the past? What is their preferred way of receiving information and support in the future?

This section focuses on the ways in which parents have received information and support in relation to child maintenance in the past (face-to-face, phone, etc.), and the ways in which they would like to receive it in the future.

6.4.1 Mediums of information used in the past

As Table 6.9 shows, parents were most likely to have received information and support in the past through face-to-face meetings (for around eight in ten parents) and through telephone conversations (for around three in ten parents). Around one in ten parents had consulted leaflets or publications and websites respectively. CSA non-benefit PWCs were more likely to say that they had received information over the telephone (44 per cent), than those on benefits (21 per cent).

Table 6.9 Mediums of information and support used in the past

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Face-to-face meetings	76	83	83
Telephone conversations	29	34	32
Consulting publications/leaflets	11	12	9
Consulting websites	9	13	6
Emails	4	6	1
Internet forum	2	6	3
Self help group	0	4	0
Workshops	0	1	*
Other	8	4	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>185</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>182</i>

Base: All parents who had received information and support in the past, apart from those who had only received it from family and friends.

Table 6.10 focuses on parents who had attended face-to-face meetings, showing which organisations they had met with. For the two PWCs groups, meetings were most commonly with a Jobcentre Plus or NDLP Adviser – over half (55 per cent) of CSA PWCs and nearly four in ten (37 per cent) of non-CSA PWCs had attended a meeting like this. Around a fifth of the PWCs groups (20 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 23 per cent of CSA PWCs) had attended a face-to-face meeting with the CAB. CSA NRPs were most likely to have had face-to-face meetings with the CAB (56 per cent) than with any other organisation.

Table 6.10 Organisations from which parents had received information and support in face-to-face meetings, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Jobcentre Plus/NDLP Adviser	37	7	55
CAB	20	56	23
CAFCASS	10	12	7
Social services or social worker	10	7	9
Health visitor/GP	6	0	11
Relate	5	8	0
Family mediation helpline	3	6	1
Women's aid	3	0	1
One parent families	2	4	4
Parentline Plus	1	0	0
Fathers advice/support group	0	3	0
Gingerbread	0	0	0
Church/spiritual leader	0	3	1
Other mediator/organisation (apart from the CSA)	20	13	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>153</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>150</i>

Base: All parents who had received information through face-to-face meetings in the past.

Most parents found the face-to-face meeting(s) that they had in relation to child maintenance helpful: at least seven in ten parents found their meetings very or quite helpful (78 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 68 per cent of CSA NRPs and 70 per cent of CSA PWCs).

6.4.2 Preferred mediums for receiving information and support in the future

Parents were asked about their likely information and support needs in regard to child maintenance in the future and how they would like to receive this, for example by talking to someone in person or over the phone or by looking at information on the Internet. Table 6.11 shows that parents were most likely to want face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations. Around seven in ten parents said that they would like information from a face-to-face meeting (72 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 75 per cent of CSA NRPs and 67 per cent of CSA PWCs) and 45 per cent or more thought information over the phone would be useful (51 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 45 per cent of CSA NRPs and 59 per cent of CSA PWCs). Parents were also interested in using websites, leaflets and publications. Non-CSA PWCs expressed a slight preference for websites (22 per cent), compared to CSA parents (15 per cent).

Comparison between CSA PWCs in benefit and non-benefit cases shows that three-quarters of those on benefits would like to receive information face-to-face (74 per cent), whilst half would like to receive it over the phone (52 per cent). However, there was not this distinction between conversations in person and over the telephone with non-benefit cases: the same proportion of non-benefit cases mentioned telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings (63 per cent for both).

Table 6.11 Medium(s) of information and support parents would prefer to use in the future

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Face-to-face meetings	72	75	67	74	63
Telephone conversations	51	45	59	52	63
Consulting websites	22	15	15	12	18
Emails	14	14	14	9	18
Consulting publications/ leaflets	11	8	8	10	7
Internet forum	4	7	4	4	3
Self help group	2	5	2	1	2
Workshops	2	4	2	3	2
Other	2	2	2	2	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	396	365	509	211	297
<i>Unweighted base</i>	396	352	512	194	318

Base: All parents who thought they might need information and support in the future.

Of course, from Table 6.11, it is not clear how many parents were choosing to use just face-to-face meetings, just phone conversations and so on, as they could choose more than one medium. Table 6.12 shows the proportions of parents who would ideally choose to use only face-to-face contact, only phone contact and so on. The parents that would prefer to receive information through face-to-face meetings were roughly split between those who would like information through face-to-face meetings only and those who would like face-to-face meetings as well as other forms of communication. CSA NRPs were most likely to say that they would like face-to-face meetings only. Four in ten (40 per cent) preferred this compared to three in ten of the PWCs groups (30 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 31 per cent of CSA PWCs). CSA PWCs were the most likely to say they would prefer telephone communication only (16 per cent, twice as many the other two groups of parents).

Table 6.12 Medium(s) of information and support parents would prefer to use in the future: detail

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Only face-to-face	30	40	31
Only telephone	8	9	16
Face-to-face and at least one other	43	36	36
At least one other not including face-to-face	12	10	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	396	365	509
<i>Unweighted base</i>	396	352	512

Base: All parents who thought they might need information and support in the future.

6.5 What types of information and support have parents sought in the past and what will they need in the future?

This section looks at the types of issues that parents seek information and support about. It looks first at the types of information and support they have sought in the past, both in terms of child support and in terms of related issues. Finally, the section reports on the issues that parents feel they might need help with in the future.

6.5.1 Information and support sought in the past

The child maintenance issues about which parents had sought information and support via face-to-face meetings in the past are shown in Table 6.13. For all parents, working out how much maintenance to pay or receive was a key concern, with around a third of the three groups mentioning this (31 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 33 per cent of both the CSA NRPs and PWCs). The two PWCs groups had tended to look into whether or not to make maintenance arrangements and the practicalities associated with it:

- approximately two-fifths of both PWCs groups had sought guidance on whether or not to make a formal maintenance arrangement (40 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 38 per cent of CSA PWCs);
- three in ten had looked into whether or not to make maintenance arrangements at all (27 per cent of both).

The best way to collect maintenance was also a concern for PWCs, particularly for the CSA PWCs: two-fifths mentioned this (40 per cent) compared to a quarter of non-CSA PWCs (26 per cent).

A fifth of the CSA PWCs had sought information on what to do if there were problems (22 per cent) and this had been a particular concern for those in non-benefit cases, 31 per cent of whom had looked for this kind of information, compared to 14 per cent of those on benefits.

The main concerns for CSA NRPs were linked to working out how much maintenance to pay (33 per cent) and whether they should pay more or less maintenance (21 per cent).

Table 6.13 Types of information and support parents had received in the past, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Whether I should set up a formal child maintenance arrangement	40	16	38
Working out how much child maintenance to pay/receive	31	33	33
Whether I should make a child maintenance arrangement at all	27	7	27
The best way to collect or make child maintenance payments	26	19	40
Emotional support	21	16	13
What to do if there are problems with child maintenance payments	15	13	22
Whether I should accept child maintenance payments (PWC)	14	0	9
Information or support about issues other than child maintenance	4	8	0
General information/support about child maintenance	3	4	1
Whether I should pay more or less child maintenance (NRP)	1	21	0
Whether I should pay child maintenance (NRP)	1	16	0
Information on the CSA or support with CSA application/claim	1	0	4
Other	6	5	5
No information or support received	5	5	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>147</i>

Base: All parents who had received information through face-to-face meetings in the past.

6.5.2 Other topics of information and support parents had received when they were seeking support on child maintenance

Parents were asked whether they had sought information on other issues at the same time as getting the information about child maintenance. Table 6.14 shows that large proportions of parents had not received information on any other topics (44 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 51 per cent of CSA NRPs and 58 per cent of CSA PWCs). CSA PWC in benefit cases were less likely to have sought information on different topics from those in non-benefit cases (67 per cent of those in benefit cases said they had received no other information, compared to 48 per cent of those in non-benefit cases – not shown in the table).

Of those who had found out about other issues:

- around a fifth of non-CSA PWCs (21 per cent) and a quarter of CSA NRPs (25 per cent) had sought advice on contact arrangements. However, this was less common among the CSA PWCs (ten per cent);
- advice about financial issues other than child maintenance was also an area that between eight and 23 per cent of parents had sought information on;
- non-CSA PWCs were more likely than the other two groups of parents to have sought mediation. As was shown in Chapter 4, four in ten (38 per cent) of these parents had made private arrangements, so it may have been that in the course of making an arrangement that parents received mediation and advice on child maintenance;
- eight per cent of both PWCs groups had sought employment advice, which may well have been from a Jobcentre Plus or NDLP Adviser. Section 6.4.1 showed that they were more likely than NRPs to have spoken to these advisers in relation to child maintenance.

Table 6.14 Other types of information and support parents had received in the past, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Advice about financial matters other than child maintenance	23	8	17
Contact arrangements	21	25	10
Legal advice	15	15	8
Mediation	13	3	1
Employment advice	8	0	8
Housing advice	5	5	9
Other	14	11	10
No information or support received about other issues	44	51	58
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>152</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>149</i>

Base: All parents who had received information through face to face meetings in the past.

6.5.3 Types of information and support parents may need in the future

A significant minority (22 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 14 per cent of CSA NRPs and 16 per cent of CSA PWCs) were unable to predict in what areas they might need information and support in the future. The areas where parents thought they might need information are listed in Table 6.15.

Across all groups of parents, working out how much maintenance to pay or receive was seen as key, particularly for the CSA clients, two-fifths of whom (40 per cent of CSA NRPs and 41 per cent of CSA PWCs) thought they would need information and support in this area in the future. Another key area of concern highlighted by half (50 per cent) of the CSA PWCs, was what to do if there are problems with maintenance payments. This was a particular issue for those in non-benefit cases, 55 per cent of whom mentioned this compared to 43 per cent of those in benefit cases. How to deal with problems was also an issue for the two other groups of parents to a lesser extent and was mentioned by three in ten of them (32 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 29 per cent of CSA NRPs).

Non-CSA PWCs thought they might need information on setting up a maintenance arrangement in the future. Twenty-nine per cent thought they might need help on whether they should set up a formal arrangement and 13 per cent thought that they might look into whether or not to set up a child maintenance arrangement at all. As shown in Chapter 4, more than half of this group of parents did not already have a child maintenance arrangement, so it is not surprising that they feel they may need guidance in this area in the future. CSA NRPs thought key issues for

them in the future would be whether to pay more or less child maintenance (29 per cent) and whether to pay maintenance at all (18 per cent).

Table 6.15 Types of information and support parents may need in future, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Working out how much to pay/receive	34	40	41
What to do if there are problems with child maintenance payments	32	29	50
Whether I should set up a formal child maintenance arrangement	29	17	14
The best way to collect or make child maintenance payments	16	14	21
Whether I should make a child maintenance arrangement at all	13	7	6
Whether I should accept child maintenance payments (PWC)	10	0	9
Emotional support	10	11	6
Whether I should pay more or less child maintenance (NRP)	0	29	0
Whether I should pay child maintenance (NRP)	0	18	0
Other	7	7	5
Don't know	22	14	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	398	366	511
<i>Unweighted base</i>	398	352	514

Base: All parents who thought they might need information and support in the future.

6.5.4 Timing of the receipt of information and support

Parents were asked when they thought that separating parents would benefit most from information and support – before separation, immediately after separation or at some point later (Table 6.16). There was minority support from all groups of parents for the provision of information and support before the point of break-up. Around five or six in ten parents thought that the information and support was best given immediately after separation and around a third thought it was best to wait until some time after the break-up. CSA PWCs were most likely (59 per cent) to think that information and support should be provided immediately after separation and least likely to think it should wait until later (28 per cent).

Table 6.16 Preferred timing of the provision of information and support, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Before separation	20	15	16
Immediately after separation	45	51	59
Later	33	35	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>449</i>	<i>592</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>451</i>	<i>595</i>

Base: All parents.

6.6 What are the information and support needs of non-Child Support Agency non-resident parents?

The most common reason that non-CSA NRPs gave for not using the CSA to make child maintenance arrangements was that they had already made their own arrangements with their ex-partners (73 per cent). Other reasons mentioned included that they felt it was easier to arrange maintenance privately (41 per cent), that they did not want anyone else involved (33 per cent) and the bad reputation of the CSA (31 per cent). The majority of this group of parents had not used the CSA website (84 per cent). Of those who had, most had used it to work out how much maintenance to pay.

Three in ten (28 per cent) non-CSA NRPs had consulted a solicitor in the past in relation to child maintenance and three-quarters (77 per cent) of these had found it a useful exercise. A quarter (23 per cent) had a court or consent order, and of those that did not currently have a court or consent order, five per cent had had one in the past.

A third (34 per cent) of non-CSA NRPs who had used information and support services in the past had used the CAB. This was the organisation that they would most commonly turn to in the future (mentioned by 51 per cent of those that said they would use formal information and support services in the future).

Face-to-face communication was the most common way of receiving information and support in relation to child maintenance with six in ten (63 per cent) parents having been given information in this way. Three in ten (30 per cent) non-CSA NRPs had used telephone conversations and websites. Eight in ten (82 per cent) found their face-to-face meeting very or quite helpful. Of those who were interested in receiving information and support in relation to child maintenance in the future, most preferred face-to-face meetings (68 per cent) but a third were also interested in telephone information (32 per cent) and websites (33 per cent).

Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of non-CSA NRPs had sought guidance on how to work out how much maintenance to pay. They were also interested finding out about whether or not to make a maintenance arrangement, with half (49 per cent) looking into making a formal arrangement and three in ten (29 per cent) looking at whether to make an arrangement at all. A third (35 per cent) of non-CSA NRPs did not get any information or support on other issues when seeking guidance on child maintenance, however, a quarter also found out about contact arrangements and non-maintenance-related financial issues (both 24 per cent). The areas where parents thought they might need information and support in the future were the level of maintenance to pay (41 per cent) and whether to pay more or less (43 per cent).

6.7 Summary

- A large proportion of CSA parents were dissatisfied with the service they had received from the CSA. Forty-four per cent of CSA NRPs and 34 per cent of CSA PWCs thought the service was very poor. Reasons CSA parents gave for thinking the service was poor were that the CSA was inefficient and took a long time to do things, that parents were unable to get answers to their questions and that they were given incorrect or inconsistent information.
- Non-CSA PWCs had chosen not to use the CSA most often because they had already had an arrangement set up (39 per cent), did not want to cause friction with their ex-partner (19 per cent) or did not want maintenance from their ex-partner (19 per cent). Parents in the 'happy contact' type and 'unhappy contact' type were much more likely to say that they had not used the CSA because they had already made a private arrangement, whereas those in the 'no contact at all' and 'no face-to-face contact' types were more likely than the other types to say that they did not want maintenance from their ex-partners.
- Only a minority of parents (18 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and six per cent of both CSA groups) had used the CSA website. Those who had used it were most often looking for information on how to work how much maintenance to pay or collect.
- Most parents (83 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 85 per cent of CSA NRPs and 84 per cent of CSA PWCs) had not consulted a solicitor in the past. Of those who had, at least six in ten of the PWCs (69 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 60 per cent of CSA PWCs) found it useful, whilst a smaller proportion of CSA NRPs felt this (49 per cent).
- Sources of information that parents had used in the past, most commonly, were:
 - Jobcentre Plus or NDLP Advisers – used most often by PWCs (29 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 49 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - CAB – used most often by CSA NRPs (48 per cent).

- Most parents would consider using a professional organisation in the future if they needed information and support in relation to child maintenance. CSA clients were most likely to consider this (77 per cent of CSA NRPs and 82 per cent of CSA PWCs said they might, compared to 65 per cent of non-CSA PWCs).
- The organisations that parents most often said they would turn to in the future were:
 - CAB, which was most popular among CSA NRPs (59 per cent mentioned this compared to 46 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 48 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - the CSA or another Government agency, which was most popular among CSA PWCs (55 per cent, compared to 42 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 38 per cent of CSA NRPs);
 - solicitor or lawyers – mentioned by 41 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 40 per cent of CSA NRPs and 33 per cent of CSA PWCs.
- The most common methods of receiving information and support were through face-to-face meetings (76 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, and 83 per cent respectively of CSA NRPs and PWCs) and over the phone (29 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 34 per cent of CSA NRPs and 32 per cent of CSA PWCs).
- The preferred methods for receiving information and support in the future reflected those already used:
 - between two-thirds and three-quarters of parents would like information through face-to-face meetings (72 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 75 per cent of CSA NRPs and 67 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - around half would like information over the telephone (51 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 45 per cent of CSA NRPs and 59 per cent of CSA PWCs).
- Of those parents who had sought information in the past, the most common topics they were interested in were:
 - for all three groups – working out how much maintenance to pay or receive (31 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, and 33 per cent of CSA NRPs and CSA PWCs respectively);
 - PWCs were particularly concerned with whether or not to make a formal arrangement (40 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 38 per cent of CSA PWCs, compared to 16 per cent of CSA NRPs);
 - the main concerns for NRPs were whether to pay more or less maintenance (21 per cent).
- Though a significant minority of parents were not sure about the areas in which they might need help and support in the future (22 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 14 per cent CSA of NRPs, 16 per cent of CSA PWCs), key areas of interest across all groups were working out how much maintenance to pay or receive (34 per cent non-CSA PWCs, 40 per cent CSA NRPs, 41 per cent CSA PWCs) and what to do if there are problems with child maintenance (32 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 29 per cent of CSA NRPs and 50 of CSA PWCs).

7 Parents' views on the new emphasis on private arrangements

7.1 Introduction

One of the key policy reforms set out in the White Paper is to encourage more parents to take responsibility for their own child maintenance arrangements and wherever possible, empower them to make child maintenance arrangements between themselves, without the involvement of the courts or a Government agency like the Child Support Agency (CSA). In order to do this, the requirement that parents with care (PWCs) who are claiming benefits must use the CSA will be removed, PWCs will be able to keep more of their maintenance and there will be information and support available to parents so they can make informed decisions about maintenance arrangements. The intended outcomes of these changes are that parents will have more control over the arrangements that they make and that PWCs will receive more maintenance (DWP, 2006c). However, concerns have been raised that this emphasis on private arrangements will mean that some PWCs will be pushed into making arrangements that they are not happy with and that others will be unable to make arrangements between themselves at all but will not turn to Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC) as intended (DWP, 2007a).

7.1.1 Plan of chapter

This chapter reports on what separated parents think about making private arrangements. It starts by looking at separated parents' opinions on a general level. It looks first at the extent to which they think third parties such as the courts or the Government should be involved when parents separate. The focus then turns to what separated parents think might facilitate making private arrangements. The perceived benefits and disadvantages of private arrangements compared to the involvement of a third party, such as the Government, are then examined.

The chapter then looks at separated parents' views at a more personal level, looking specifically at how confident they would feel in making their own arrangements with their ex-partners. The last part of the chapter looks to the future and at what kind of support separated parents think the Government should provide in order to help separating parents make their own child maintenance arrangements.

Throughout the chapter, the findings for the three main sample groups – the non-CSA PWCs, the CSA non-resident parents (NRPs) and the CSA PWCs – are reported. As discussed in Section 1.3.3, the findings for the non-CSA NRPs are discussed at the end of the chapter in Section 7.6 due to the smaller sample size of this group. For the three main groups of parents, their views on private arrangements are examined from a number of angles by comparing benefit and non-benefit cases for the CSA parents, looking at those who pay or receive maintenance compared to those who do not, and also looking at the differences between the five types of separated families discussed in Section 5.2.

7.2 What do separated parents think the role of Government should be in relation to child maintenance?

Parents were asked whether they thought separating parents should be making child maintenance arrangements between themselves or with the involvement of a third party, such as a Government agency or other organisation³⁸. As Table 7.1 shows, large numbers thought that separating parents should involve a third party in the organisation of their maintenance. It is perhaps not surprising that CSA PWCs who had received help (via the CSA) were the most likely to think this. CSA PWCs who were not on benefits (i.e. those most likely to have had difficulties setting up their own private arrangements) were the most likely to say that the involvement of a Government agency was advantageous. Six in ten (59 per cent) thought this compared to half (47 per cent) of CSA PWCs in benefit cases and around a quarter of the other groups.

However, it is perhaps surprising that as many as a quarter (25 per cent) of non-CSA PWCs thought that the involvement of a Government agency would be advantageous, given that these are parents who have chosen not to involve the Government in their financial arrangements following separation. A further quarter (24 per cent) thought another organisation should be involved but nearly half thought that parents should agree between themselves (49 per cent).

³⁸ In the introduction to this question the following paragraph was read out in order to give some context. *'As I mentioned earlier, the Government is planning to redesign the system for child maintenance to encourage more parents to make arrangements between themselves rather than use a Government agency like the CSA. Parents with care on benefits will not have to use the CSA or a similar agency anymore.'*

Table 7.1 Parents' views on how separating parents should make child maintenance arrangements, by PWC and NRP status

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

Base: All parents.

Looking at the views of the five types of separated families, it is clear that there are links between the contact arrangements and quality of relationships that parents have with their ex-partners and their views on making maintenance arrangements. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 show the results for the CSA NRPs and CSA PWCs (the responses of the non-CSA PWCs tell a similar story to the CSA NRPs).

In general, those in the 'happy contact' type were more likely than those in other groups to advocate the parents making maintenance arrangements without the help of a third party. However, NRPs in the 'happy contact' type were more than twice as likely than PWCs to think this (72 per cent compared to 30 per cent).

NRPs in the 'unhappy contact' and 'no contact at all' types were roughly split between those who thought parents should make arrangements with the help of the Government and those who thought parents should agree between themselves. Interestingly, nearly half (47 per cent) of NRPs in the 'no face-to-face contact' type favoured parents making arrangements themselves.

CSA PWCs in these three groups were all most likely to support the idea of involving a Government agency, with more than half of each saying this.

Table 7.2 Parents' views on how separating parents should make child maintenance arrangements – CSA NRPs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Agree between themselves	72	34	35	47	[38]
Agree with help of a Government agency	15	31	38	22	[41]
Agree with help of other organisation	12	32	24	26	[15]
Agree another way	1	3	4	5	[5]
<i>Weighted base</i>	190	87	98	67	20
<i>Unweighted base</i>	175	78	107	73	26

Base: All CSA NRPs.

Table 7.3 Parents' views on how separating parents should make child maintenance arrangements – CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Agree between themselves	30	23	16	15	[7]
Agree with help of a Government agency	45	59	56	59	[72]
Agree with help of other organisation	24	15	25	23	[14]
Agree another way	1	3	3	3	[7]
<i>Weighted base</i>	199	138	154	101	26
<i>Unweighted base</i>	184	142	160	104	28

Base: All CSA PWCs.

Parents who thought that separating parents should agree on child maintenance arrangements between themselves were asked a follow-up question:

'When separating parents cannot agree on maintenance arrangements themselves, should it be a Government agency, like the CSA, or the courts that get involved?'

Responses from parents were fairly evenly split between those who favoured a Government agency and those who favoured the courts (Table 7.4)³⁹. This suggests that even those parents who believe that separated parents should ideally make private arrangements feel that there is a place for Government intervention when parents are unable to come to suitable arrangements themselves.

Table 7.4 Parents' views on who should get involved when parents cannot agree on child maintenance arrangements themselves, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Government agency	42	48	56
Courts	46	39	39
Other ¹	7	7	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	295	236	132
<i>Unweighted base</i>	295	224	127

Base: All parents who thought parents should agree child maintenance arrangements between themselves.

¹ If parents said 'other' at this question they were given the option of suggesting who else should get involved when parents cannot agree on child maintenance arrangements. The most frequently mentioned options were 'mediator' and 'solicitor'.

7.3 What do parents think about private arrangements?

This section of the chapter continues looking at parents' general (i.e. non-personal) views of private arrangements, reporting on the factors they think facilitate private arrangements and what they see as the benefits and disadvantages compared to arrangements that involve a third party, such as the CSA or the courts.

7.3.1 Factors perceived to facilitate making private arrangements

Separated parents were asked what factors they thought would help parents to make child maintenance arrangements between themselves. They could choose their responses, which are shown in Table 7.5, from a pre-coded list of options.

Across all groups of parents, some of the key factors that were seen as useful were having access to help and the relationship between the PWC and the NRP. At least half of each group of parents mentioned factors linked to help from an outside source: someone to help work out maintenance levels and someone to help parents negotiate between themselves. Slightly smaller proportions of parents, between four in ten and five in ten, thought that factors linked to parents' relationships,

³⁹ Although more of the CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs mentioned Government agency, compared to the courts, these differences were not significant.

such as how friendly the relationship is and their financial situations, were also important.

Comparison between responses from the three different groups of parents shows that whilst the groups placed importance on a number of the same factors, the emphasis of each differed in some respects:

- Factors linked to the parents' relationship were more likely to be mentioned by non-CSA PWCs, with more than half of them saying the friendliness of the parents' relationship was important, compared to around two-fifths of the other two groups of parents.
- For the CSA NRPs, having contact with their children was particularly important, with more than half mentioning it, compared with around 30 to 40 per cent of the other parents.
- The CSA PWCs had a different perspective from the other two groups of parents. They were more likely to focus on factors linked to the enforcement of private arrangements by a Government agency, which mirrors their greater support for Government intervention seen in Table 7.1. They were much more likely to think that the monitoring of private arrangements by a Government agency and a guarantee of help⁴⁰ from the Government if the arrangements fail, would help parents make their own arrangements. More than half of this group highlighted these two factors as important compared to only 30 to 40 per cent of the other two groups of parents.

Comparison between benefit and non-benefit cases for the CSA parents shows that CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases were slightly keener on enforcement-related factors: 34 per cent thought that being able to register private arrangements with a Government agency would be helpful, compared to 25 per cent of benefit cases. Among the NRPs a higher proportion of non-benefit cases (63 per cent) thought access to someone to help them negotiate between themselves would be useful, compared to benefit cases (48 per cent).

⁴⁰ Note the question asked parents about a guarantee of **help** (ie availability of help from the Government), rather than a guarantee of maintenance receipt.

Table 7.5 Factors perceived to facilitate making private arrangements, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Someone to help work out how much to pay/ receive	56	56	61	55	57	60	61
Someone to help parents negotiate between themselves	55	57	50	48	63	49	51
A friendly relationship between the parents	54	44	39	40	46	38	40
The parents being in a good financial situation	49	46	30	49	43	30	29
Trust between the parents	44	39	33	37	41	32	34
Guarantee that help will be provided by the Government if the arrangements fail	40	36	55	34	38	51	58
The NRP having regular contact with the child/ren	39	51	29	47	54	31	27
A Government agency checking private arrangements are being stuck to	34	32	56	32	32	52	59
Being able to register private arrangements with a Government agency	18	30	31	30	30	25	34
Other	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Nothing	1	2	1	2	1	2	*
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>638</i>	<i>476</i>	<i>620</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>268</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>370</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>638</i>	<i>475</i>	<i>622</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>227</i>	<i>395</i>

Base: All parents.

Comparisons were made between the views of parents that paid or received child maintenance and those who did not. Overall, the factors that parents mentioned most often were the same – relating to having access to help and the relationship between the parents. However, those receiving or paying maintenance mentioned nearly all factors more frequently compared to those who were not receiving/paying it. Table 7.6 shows the responses for the non-CSA PWCs, though the responses given by CSA NRPs and PWCs followed a similar pattern. Factors which

parents receiving and paying maintenance were more likely to mention as being useful were:

- access to someone to help parents negotiate between themselves;
- access to someone to help work out the level of maintenance;
- a friendly relationship between the parents;
- trust between the parents;
- a guarantee of help, if arrangements fail;
- contact between the NRP and the child.

These results highlight the degree of scepticism among those who do not currently receive maintenance (i.e. those non-CSA PWCs without a successful private arrangement) about their ability to make private arrangements.

Table 7.6 Factors perceived to facilitate making private arrangements – non-CSA PWC only, by whether or not received maintenance

	Non-CSA PWCs	
	Received maintenance %	Did not receive maintenance %
Someone to help parents negotiate between themselves	69	48
Someone to help work out how much to pay/ receive	67	49
A friendly relationship between the parents	65	48
Trust between the parents	55	39
The parents being in a good financial situation	53	46
The NRP having regular contact with the child/ren	47	35
Guarantee that help will be provided by the Government if the arrangements fail	46	37
A Government agency checking private arrangements are being stuck to	37	32
Being able to register private arrangements with a Government agency	16	18
Other	1	*
Nothing	0	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	223	365
<i>Unweighted base</i>	223	365

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Turning now to the five different 'types' of separated families, Tables 7.7 and 7.8 show the factors CSA NRPs and CSA PWCs thought would be helpful (non-CSA PWCs across the five types had similar views to CSA NRPs). Those in the 'unhappy contact' group tended to focus more on issues related to enforcement, such as the Government monitoring compliance.

Table 7.7 Factors perceived to facilitate making private arrangements – CSA NRPs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
The parents being in a good financial situation	54	37	50	32	[37]
Someone to help work out how much to pay/receive	54	58	61	58	[55]
Someone to help parents negotiate between themselves	53	49	71	57	[60]
A friendly relationship between the parents	53	36	39	43	[12]
The NRP having regular contact with the child/ren	48	47	67	56	[27]
Trust between the parents	45	37	40	33	[12]
Guarantee of help from the Government if arrangements fail	38	39	38	35	[22]
Government agency checking private arrangements are being stuck to	29	26	50	28	[22]
Registering private arrangements with a Government agency	24	29	44	29	[32]
Other	1	2	1	1	[3]
Nothing	3	3	0	0	[0]
<i>Weighted base</i>	192	87	98	67	20
<i>Unweighted base</i>	178	79	108	74	25

Base: All CSA NRPs.

The responses across the family 'types' for the CSA PWCs show some differences, compared to the two other sample groups. CSA PWCs in the 'happy contact' type were less likely to cite enforcement-related factors such as a Government agency checking their arrangement and having a guarantee of help if arrangements fail, suggesting that these issues are less important if relations between the separated parents are good.

Table 7.8 Factors perceived to facilitate making private arrangements – CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Someone to help you work out how much to pay/receive	66	53	67	52	[50]
Someone to help parents negotiate between themselves	57	48	54	39	[26]
A friendly relationship between the parents	56	26	36	31	[12]
A Government agency checking private arrangements are being stuck to	46	61	60	60	[77]
Guarantee that help will be provided by the Government if the arrangements fail	45	59	60	63	[52]
Trust between the parents	40	29	35	29	[12]
The parents being in a good financial situation	38	22	28	28	[19]
The NRP having regular contact with the child/ren	39	21	30	22	[13]
Being able to register private arrangements with a Government agency	25	32	37	31	[26]
Other	0	0	2	1	[0]
Nothing	0	3	1	0	[3]
<i>Weighted base</i>	199	140	156	99	25
<i>Unweighted base</i>	184	144	162	103	27

Base: All CSA PWCs.

7.3.2 Perceived advantages and disadvantages of private arrangements

Parents were asked to choose from a pre-coded list what they thought the advantages were of private arrangements over arrangements that involved the Government or the courts. All three groups of parents saw the main advantages to making private arrangements as follows:

- they were quicker and easier;
- they helped to reduce conflict between parents;
- they were more private than making arrangements with the help of an outside organisation.

Each was mentioned by three in ten to six in ten of parents (Table 7.9).

There were, however, large differences between the responses given by the three groups of parents. CSA PWCs showed a markedly more negative attitude towards private arrangements compared to the other two groups. They were less likely to mention any of the advantages and nearly a quarter said that there were no advantages to private arrangements, compared to less than ten per cent of the other parents. It may be expected that the pessimism towards private arrangements of the CSA PWCs group would be mainly due to the negative attitudes of the non-benefit cases, who may have had unsuccessful private arrangements in the past. However, there were no differences between the benefit and non-benefit cases: both groups were similarly unenthusiastic.

CSA NRPs and non-CSA PWCs were generally more positive than the CSA PWCs about private arrangements. For more than half of the non-CSA PWCs, the way in which private arrangements helped to reduce conflict between parents was seen as advantageous and they were more likely to mention this benefit than other parents. The CSA NRPs valued the autonomy that private arrangements gave them: at least half thought key advantages were that private arrangements gave parents more control over the amount of maintenance paid and that they were private, suggesting perhaps that they had experienced a lack of control and privacy when making arrangements with the CSA. The only difference between benefit and non-benefit CSA NRPs was that those in benefit cases were more likely to say that they thought private arrangements were quicker and easier.

Table 7.9 Perceived advantages of private arrangements, by PWC and NRP status

	Non- CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non- benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Easier and quicker	63	61	48	69	55	45	50
Help reduce conflict/ arguments between parents	55	44	35	41	47	37	34
You can keep it private/ between yourselves	45	50	33	53	47	33	33
Give parents more control over the amount	41	52	32	54	50	32	32
More friendly	36	34	18	36	33	17	19
Give parents more control over how often money is paid	35	37	29	35	38	33	27
Don't rely on anyone else	32	34	22	35	33	20	23
Other	1	*	1	1	*	1	1
No advantages	6	9	24	8	10	22	25
<i>Weighted base</i>	639	476	621	209	267	252	369
<i>Unweighted base</i>	639	473	622	173	300	229	393

Base: All parents.

Comparison between the non-CSA PWCs that received child maintenance and those that did not shows that the parents who received maintenance were more likely to cite a number of advantages, as shown in Table 7.10. The advantages that were cited most often by parents who received and did not receive maintenance were the same – efficiency, that they reduced conflict and facilitated privacy. However, the parents who received maintenance were more likely to cite several advantages, compared to those who did not receive maintenance:

- that they are quicker and easier;
- that they can be kept private;
- that they give parents more control over the amount;
- that they are more friendly;
- that they don't rely on anyone else.

These parents have a successful private child maintenance arrangement in place and as such it is not surprising that they have a positive attitude towards this kind of arrangement. There were no differences between those who received maintenance and those who did not when looking at the CSA PWCs and NRPs.

Table 7.10 Perceived advantages of private arrangements – non-CSA PWC only, by whether received maintenance

	Non-CSA PWCs	
	Received maintenance %	Did not receive maintenance %
Easier and quicker	70	58
Help reduce conflict/arguments between parents	59	52
You can keep it private/between yourselves	58	40
Give parents more control over the amount	50	37
More friendly	44	33
Give parents more control over how often money is paid	40	34
Don't rely on anyone else	39	28
Other	2	1
No advantages	5	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	223	366
<i>Unweighted base</i>	223	366

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Comparison between the family 'types' shows a similar story in each of the different sample groups – that higher levels of contact between the NRP and children and between the parents is linked to a more positive attitude towards private arrangements. Across all groups, the parents in the 'happy contact' type had the most positive outlook towards private arrangements, whereas the parents in the 'no contact at all' type had the least positive attitudes. The advantages that the non-CSA PWCs chose are shown in Table 7.11 as an example. Parents in the 'happy contact' type were more likely to cite the following benefits to private arrangements compared to other groups of parents:

- that they give parents more control over the frequency of payments;
- that they are more friendly.

Table 7.11 Perceived advantages of private arrangements – non-CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Easier and quicker	70	48	68	63	[50]
They help reduce conflict	64	45	44	53	[50]
You can keep it private/ between yourselves	57	35	35	43	[50]
More friendly	52	21	20	35	[43]
Give parents more control over the amount	51	27	45	27	[43]
Give parents more control over how often money is paid	43	30	28	25	[43]
Don't rely on anyone else	39	26	28	27	[29]
Other	2	0	0	2	[0]
No advantages	2	12	8	6	[14]
<i>Weighted base</i>	276	164	95	51	14
<i>Unweighted base</i>	276	164	95	51	14

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Parents were also able to choose from a pre-coded list what they thought the main **disadvantages** were to making private arrangements. Their responses are shown in Table 7.12. Interestingly, nearly all parents – across all groups – could think of at least one disadvantage, even if they themselves had a successful arrangement. The main disadvantages that were mentioned by more than half of all three groups of parents were:

- that the non-resident might not be able or willing to pay;
- that private arrangements may cause conflict;
- that there needs to be a good relationship between the parents.

Comparisons between the parent groups show that PWCs were concerned that private arrangements were unreliable (55 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 69 per cent of CSA PWCs) and that they give the NRPs too much control (28 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 37 per cent of CSA PWCs).

In line with the limited advantages the CSA PWCs saw, they also had the most concerns about private arrangements of all the groups of parents. A higher proportion of them cited several of the disadvantages compared to the other two groups. As well as worries about reliability and lack of control they shared with the non-CSA PWCs, they were also more likely to say that the NRP might not be willing or able to pay (74 per cent) and that there is no-one to help if the arrangement fails (61 per cent).

The concerns shown by CSA PWCs were even more evident in non-benefit cases, as more of these parents mentioned nearly all of the disadvantages compared to those in benefit cases. For example, 69 per cent of non-benefit CSA PWCs felt that private arrangements may cause conflict compared to 51 per cent of benefit cases. The non-benefit cases are often those parents who have chosen to use the CSA because they had tried and were unable to come to private agreements with their ex-partners, which may account for their more negative attitude towards this kind of arrangement. These differences between benefit and non-benefit cases were not seen among the CSA NRPs.

Table 7.12 Perceived disadvantages of private arrangements, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit NRPs %	CSA non-benefit NRPs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non-benefit PWCs %
NRP might not be willing/able to pay	61	56	74	53	58	65	79
Can't be relied on	55	41	69	42	40	63	73
Might cause conflict/arguments between parents	54	56	62	52	59	51	69
Need to have a good relationship between parents	51	56	53	53	59	47	57
No-one to help if the arrangement does not work	48	43	61	42	43	51	68
Parents have to stay in contact when they may not want to	39	37	45	37	37	40	48
Might not be official or legal	33	35	35	37	33	29	39
Gives the NRP too much control over payments	28	16	37	17	14	26	45
Other reason	1	1	*	1	1	1	*
No disadvantages	4	5	3	5	5	5	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	638	475	624	208	267	254	369
<i>Unweighted base</i>	638	473	626	172	301	231	395

Base: All parents.

Non-CSA PWCs who received child maintenance were more likely to mention several of the disadvantages compared to those who did not receive maintenance. Table 7.13 shows that, for example, 71 per cent of those who received maintenance were concerned that the NRP might not be willing or able to pay, compared to

55 per cent of those who did not receive child maintenance. These are the parents with successful private arrangements, so the fact that they were more likely to say there were disadvantages appears, at first glance, to conflict with the finding above that they were also more likely to mention advantages of private arrangements, compared to those who did not receive child maintenance. However, this apparent inconsistency may reveal the complexity of experience that parents making private arrangements face and suggests that the process of making a successful private arrangement is not necessarily easy or positive but one that has both benefits and pitfalls. Another explanation may be that those parents who do not receive maintenance are so cynical about the possibility of making a successful private arrangement that they have not considered the disadvantages or advantages to them.

There were no differences between the responses of parents who received or paid and those that did not receive or pay maintenance for the CSA NRPs and PWCs.

Table 7.13 Perceived disadvantages of private arrangements – non-CSA PWC only, by whether received maintenance

	Non-CSA PWCs	
	Received maintenance %	Did not receive maintenance %
NRP might not be willing/able to pay	71	55
Might cause conflict/arguments between parents	62	51
Cannot be relied on	59	54
Need to have a good relationship between the parents	50	50
No-one to help if the arrangement does not work	49	47
Might not be official or legal	41	28
Parents have to stay in contact when they may not want to	41	40
Gives the NRP too much control over maintenance payments	39	23
Other reason	1	1
No disadvantages	5	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	224	364
<i>Unweighted base</i>	224	364

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

7.4 How confident would parents be in making their own private arrangements?

Having looked at parents' views on private arrangements at a general level, the chapter now focuses on how parents would feel about making their own private arrangements. First, this section looks at how confident parents would feel in making a private arrangement using the information and guidance services proposed in the White Paper (DWP, 2006a). It then looks at how likely they think they would be to make a private arrangement if they had the support of a trained, impartial adviser. Lastly, the reasons why some parents feel they would not want to make an arrangement in this way are examined.

7.4.1 Confidence in making a arrangement using improved information and guidance services

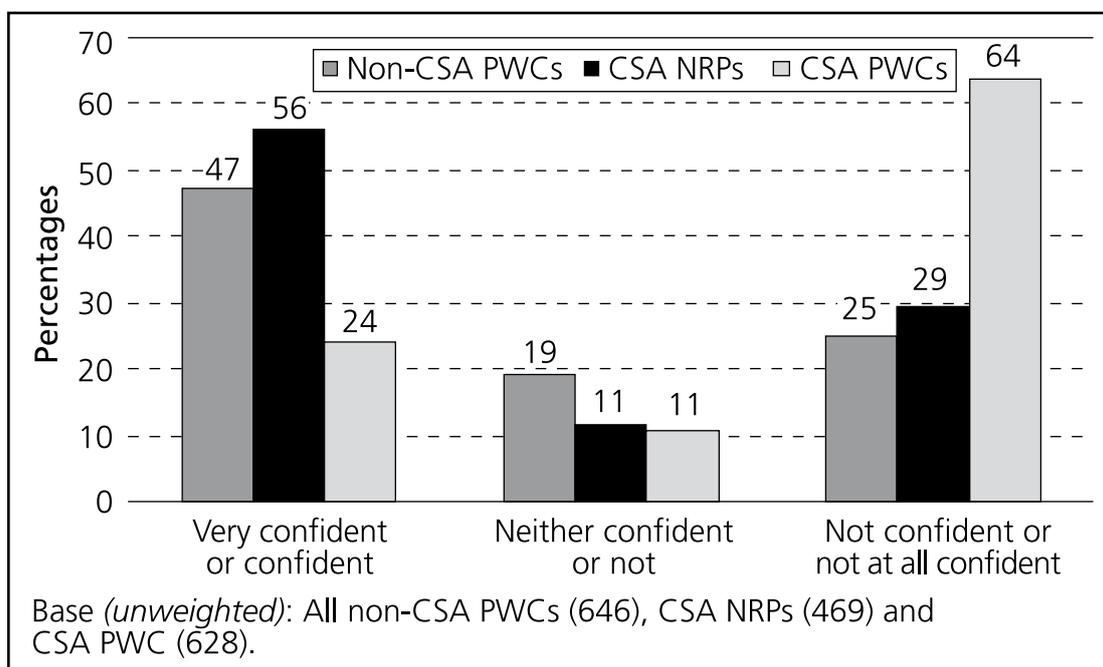
Figure 7.1 shows how confident the three groups of parents said they would be in making child maintenance arrangements using new information and guidance services. Parents were told:

'The Government wants to help more parents to make their own child maintenance arrangement, without the involvement of the CSA. They plan to help parents by improving the information and guidance that is available to them through, for example, providing a new phone line and website.'

And then asked:

'How confident would you feel about making your own child maintenance arrangements using improved information and guidance services?'

Figure 7.1 Parents' confidence in making their own child maintenance arrangements using improved information and guidance services, by PWC and NRP status



The non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs were similarly confident, with around half saying that they would be confident or very confident (47 per cent non-CSA PWCs and 56 per cent of CSA NRPs). The CSA PWCs were much less confident however, with nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) saying they felt not confident or not at all confident. Both CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs in non-benefit cases were less confident than those in benefit cases. Of the CSA PWCs, 71 per cent of those in non-benefit cases were not confident or not at all confident, compared to 54 per cent of those in benefit cases. For the CSA NRPs, these figures were 36 per cent for non-benefit cases compared to 21 per cent for benefit cases. This lack of confidence among non-benefit cases may be a result of having unsuccessfully tried to make a private agreement, before turning to the CSA. Comparison between the non-CSA PWCs who received maintenance and those who did not shows a higher level of confidence among the parents that received maintenance (62 per cent were confident or very confident compared to 40 per cent of those that did not receive maintenance), perhaps a result of many of them already having successful private arrangements set up.

Tables 7.14 to 7.16 show how confident the parents in each of the five family 'types' would be in making their own arrangements in this way. The findings suggest there is a link between the contact NRPs have with their children and how confident parents would be in making a private arrangement. A regression model was used to further investigate what variables are associated with parents' confidence in making private arrangements in this way. The five 'types' of families and the following other factors were used in the analysis:

- the number of relevant children;
- the age of the youngest child;
- the age of the mother when the oldest child was born;
- whether or not either parent has re-partnered;
- the working status of the NRP;
- the levels of poverty within the household;
- the distance between the parents' homes;
- whether or not CSA parents were in benefit cases.

Full details of the regression can be found in the Appendix. After controlling for these background variables, the confidence levels of the 'happy contact' type remained highest:

- For all parent groups the 'happy contact' type was the most likely of all types of parents to say they would be very confident or confident in making a private arrangement.
- For the non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs the 'unhappy contact' and 'no contact at all' were the least confident.

- All types, for the CSA PWCs, apart from the 'happy contact' type, tended to be not confident or not at all confident, again reflecting their greater level of concern over private arrangements.

Table 7.14 Parents' confidence in making their own child maintenance arrangements using improved information and guidance services – non-CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Very confident or confident	67	21	40	48	[43]
Neither confident or not	15	24	25	17	[7]
Not confident or not at all confident	10	44	29	31	[29]
Can make arrangement without information	9	11	6	4	[21]
<i>Weighted base</i>	278	167	96	52	14
<i>Unweighted base</i>	278	167	96	52	14

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Table 7.15 Parents' confidence in making their own child maintenance arrangements using improved information and guidance services – CSA NRPs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Very confident or confident	73	36	52	47	[36]
Neither confident or not	7	21	10	15	[10]
Not confident or not at all confident	17	40	37	35	[40]
Can make arrangement without information	4	3	0	2	[14]
<i>Weighted base</i>	190	84	97	67	21
<i>Unweighted base</i>	175	77	106	74	26

Base: All CSA NRPs.

Table 7.16 Parents' confidence in making their own child maintenance arrangements using improved information and guidance services – CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Very confident or confident	41	17	14	17	[15]
Neither confident or not	14	5	13	6	[13]
Not confident or not at all confident	43	75	72	75	[67]
Can make arrangement without information	2	3	0	2	[5]
<i>Weighted base</i>	200	142	156	101	26
<i>Unweighted base</i>	185	146	163	104	28

Base: All CSA PWCs.

These findings suggest that whilst some parents are clearly willing to make the transition from using the CSA to making their own arrangements with information and support from C-MEC, others will be less keen. It appears that many of the CSA NRPs will be happy to use the new services provided by C-MEC to make private arrangements and there may even be some new business for the information and guidance services from separated parents who have not chosen to use the CSA in the past. However, information and guidance may not be enough to support or persuade the CSA PWCs and those parents who have tried and failed to make private arrangements in the past, to make maintenance arrangements under the new system.

7.4.2 Likelihood of making a private arrangement with help from a trained, impartial adviser

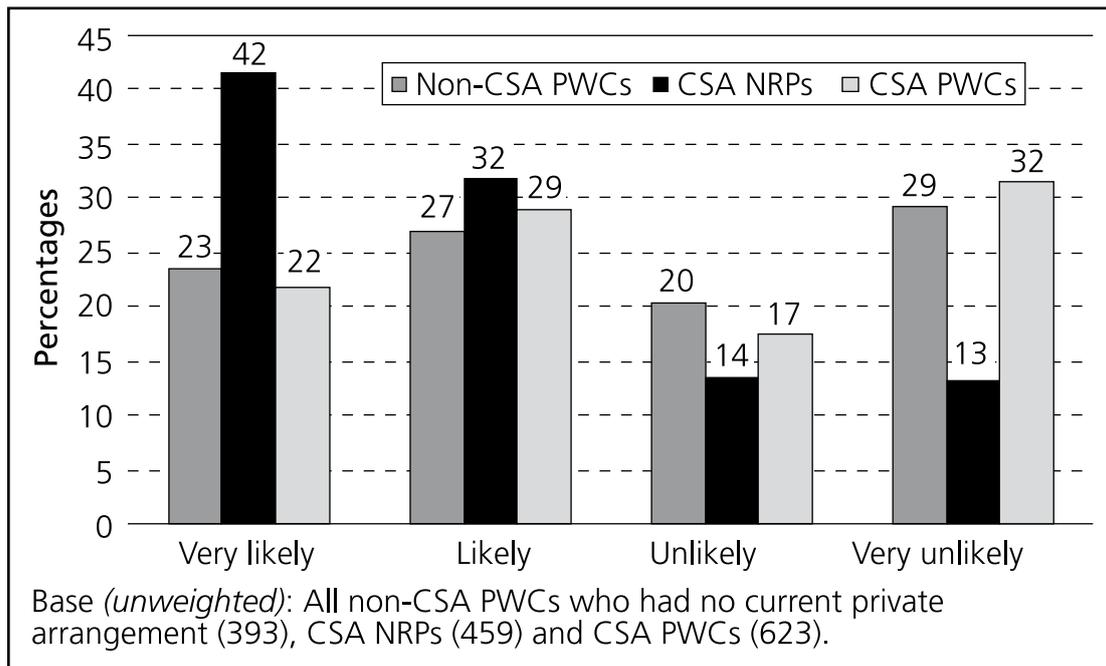
All parents who used the CSA and the non-CSA PWCs who did not have a private arrangement, were asked the following question:

'Imagine that you had access to a trained, impartial adviser to help with making a private arrangement. How likely do you think you would be to make a private arrangement with your ex-partner?'

Their responses are shown in Figure 7.2. CSA NRPs were twice as likely as PWCs to say they were 'very likely' to want to try and make a child maintenance arrangement with support from an adviser. Two-fifths (42 per cent) of CSA NRPs said that they would be very likely to use an adviser in this way compared to only around one-fifth of non-CSA PWCs (23 per cent), and CSA PWCs (22 per cent). CSA PWCs who received child maintenance were slightly more confident than those who did not, with 31 per cent of the group who received maintenance saying they

would be likely try to make an arrangement in this way, compared to 22 per cent who did not receive child maintenance, perhaps reflecting their scepticism about the possibility of making successful maintenance arrangements at all.

Figure 7.2 Likelihood of parents making a private arrangement with the help of a trained, impartial adviser, by PWC and NRP status



Tables 7.18 to 7.20 show how likely the parents within the five 'types' of families would be to try to make a private arrangement with the help of a trained, impartial adviser. The responses show that there is a clear link between contact with children – of any kind for the NRPs and particularly face-to-face contact for the PWCs – and how likely they would be to try make an arrangement in this way. Again, a regression model was carried out to investigate the other variables that predict parents' likelihood of trying to make a private arrangement in this way (see the Appendix).

- For all parent groups, parents in the 'happy contact' type were the most likely to make an arrangement in this way. For CSA PWCs, this type were significantly more likely than parents in any of the other four types.
- Unsurprisingly, given that parents would need to have some contact in order to make a private arrangement, for all sample groups the parents in the 'no contact at all' group thought they would be less likely to make an arrangement in this way.

Table 7.17 Likelihood of parents making a private arrangement with the help of a trained, impartial adviser – non-CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Very likely	33	15	32	17	[17]
Likely	39	17	20	29	[50]
Unlikely	16	21	25	29	[33]
Very unlikely	13	47	23	24	[0]
<i>Weighted base</i>	122	156	44	41	6
<i>Unweighted base</i>	122	156	44	41	6

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Table 7.18 Likelihood of parents making a private arrangement with the help of a trained, impartial adviser – CSA NRPs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Very likely	50	20	46	42	[33]
Likely	32	29	29	39	[27]
Unlikely	12	25	11	6	[17]
Very unlikely	6	26	13	13	[24]
<i>Weighted base</i>	187	87	98	66	21
<i>Unweighted base</i>	172	79	108	73	27

Base: All CSA NRPs.

Table 7.19 Likelihood of parents making a private arrangement with the help of a trained, impartial adviser – CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
Very likely	29	14	25	15	[15]
Likely	44	18	27	21	[21]
Unlikely	16	15	19	21	[13]
Very unlikely	11	53	29	44	[50]
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>199</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>28</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs.

Parents who said that they would be unlikely or very unlikely to make a private arrangement if they had access to a trained impartial adviser were asked why. The reasons they chose from a pre-coded list are shown in Table 7.21.

A similar proportion of all groups of parents, around a third, said that they did not want to make private arrangements as they did not want any contact with their ex-partners. However, that is where the similarities end, as the other reasons given by parents who had used the CSA and those who had not were quite different.

For the CSA parents, the reasons they did not want to make a private arrangement related to the quality of their relationships with their ex-partners and negative experiences of making this kind of arrangement in the past:

- More than half were worried that making a private arrangement would cause conflict or arguments with their ex-partner.
- Half of the CSA NRPs and two-thirds of the CSA PWCs did not trust their ex-partners.
- Between two in ten and three in ten were worried that there would be no proof of payment.
- Between three in ten and four in ten had tried to make an arrangement in the past which had not worked and this was a particular concern for CSA non-benefit PWCs, 45 per cent of whom had tried unsuccessfully to make an arrangement in the past compared to only 27 per cent of benefit cases.

Another key concern for around half of the CSA PWCs was that their ex-partners would not pay maintenance without the involvement of a third-party and a higher proportion of them mentioned this compared to the other parents.

The main issue for the non-CSA PWCs was that two-fifths of them did not know where their ex-partner was (41 per cent) and they were much more likely to be

in this position than the two CSA groups of parents. However, this was also an issue for a small proportion of the CSA PWCs. Those that did not receive child maintenance were more likely than those who did receive maintenance, to say that they were not sure of their ex-partners' whereabouts (28 per cent compared to 14 per cent) – probably one of the reasons why they were not getting child maintenance.

Table 7.20 Reasons why parents would not try to make private arrangements if they had access to a trained impartial adviser, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
I don't know where my ex-partner is	41	16	17
It would cause conflict/arguments	40	56	58
I don't want any contact with my ex-partner	32	30	36
I don't trust my ex-partner	28	54	66
My ex-partner would never pay without a third party involved (PWC)	14	4 ¹	51
I have tried to make private arrangements in the past and they have never worked	13	29	38
My ex-partner doesn't want any contact with me	11	19	21
I would not have proof of payment/non-payment	7	22	29
Other reason	12	7	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>304</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>309</i>

Base: Non-CSA PWCs with no current private arrangement and CSA parents who said that they would be unlikely or very unlikely to make a private arrangement if they had access to a trained impartial adviser.

¹ A small proportion of non-resident parents received child maintenance as well as paid it.

The reasons parents gave for not trying to make a private arrangement if they had help from a trained impartial adviser were examined across the different family types. For both the non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs, most types had a very small sample size. Only for the 'no contact at all' type were there enough cases for the non-CSA PWCs to examine their responses meaningfully. For the non-CSA PWCs, the reasons were unsurprisingly related to lack of contact with their ex-partners:

- that they don't know where their ex-partners are (63 per cent);
- that they do not want any contact with their ex-partners (42 per cent).

For the CSA PWCs, not knowing where their ex-partners were was also an issue but reasons relating to their acrimonious relationships with their ex-partners were also mentioned frequently:

- 52 per cent said they did not trust their ex-partners;
- 51 per cent said making a private arrangement would cause conflict or arguments;
- 43 per cent said they did not know where their ex-partners were.

Greater numbers of the CSA PWCs gave responses to this question and so we are able to examine responses across the different family types. The main reasons given were similar across the types:

- that making a private arrangement might cause conflict or arguments with their ex-partners;
- that they do not trust their ex-partners;
- that their ex-partners would not pay without the involvement of a third party.

However, as Table 7.22 shows, the CSA PWCs in the 'happy contact' type mentioned many of the reasons less frequently than the other parents, which fits in with their greater optimism towards private arrangements that has been seen earlier in the chapter.

Table 7.21 Reasons why parents would not try to make private arrangements if they had access to a trained impartial adviser – CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	1	2	3	4	5
	Happy contact %	No contact at all %	Unhappy contact %	No face-to-face contact %	Contact with children %
It would cause conflict/ arguments	50	57	64	62	[44]
I don't trust my ex-partner	39	69	75	70	[86]
My ex-partner would never pay without a third party involved	35	66	53	43	[42]
I would not have proof of payment/ non-payment	32	36	20	30	[21]
I have tried to make private arrangements in the past and they have never worked	32	29	48	50	[29]
I don't know where my ex-partner is	4	32	5	20	[18]
My ex-partner doesn't want any contact with me	4	33	13	21	[40]
I do not want/ need to receive any maintenance	4	0	0	1	[0]
I don't want any contact with my ex-partner	3	54	24	43	[63]
Other reason	6	2	1	0	[0]
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>18</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs.

7.5 What do parents think about the role of Government in the provision of information and support?

This section of the chapter reports on what separated parents think the Government should do in terms of providing information and guidance services in order to help separating parents make their own arrangements. Separated parents' views on these issues may be particularly useful in tailoring the policy changes to the child support system that are currently underway.

Parents were asked what they thought the Government should focus on in order to make sure parents get the help they need to make their own arrangements. Their answers, which were chosen from a pre-coded list, are shown in Table 7.23.

Being able to speak to someone face-to-face and having a local service were seen as some of the most important changes the Government could make. Both were similarly popular among all three groups of parents and were mentioned by more than half of the parents in each group.

Other areas that parents thought the Government should focus on included:

- being able to speak to someone over the phone, mentioned by between three in ten and four in ten parents;
- signposting to other organisations that can help them, mentioned by around one-third of parents;
- providing a standard form for calculating how much maintenance to pay or receive, mentioned by three in ten to half of parents.

The two PWCs groups were more likely to mention providing help over the phone and, unsurprisingly, that there should be more information available for PWCs. The CSA PWCs were particularly keen on a standard form for calculating maintenance, with more than half of them mentioning this.

Other priorities that were important, particularly for the CSA NRPs, were providing neutral information and guidance and (again unsurprisingly) more information for NRPs.

In addition, the CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases were more likely to mention several areas for improvement, compared to those in benefit cases. For example, 40 per cent of non-benefit cases thought more information for PWCs would be useful compared to 31 per cent of benefit cases (Table 7.23). As was shown in Section 7.4, CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases were more likely to have tried to make a private arrangement in the past and to have failed, compared to benefit cases. This suggests that this group of parents also have experience in making private arrangements and the areas of improvement that they suggest may be things that they would have found useful in the past. There were no significant differences between the CSA NRPs in benefit and non-benefit cases.

Table 7.22 Areas the Government should focus on to ensure that separating parents get the help they need to make private arrangements, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Speak to someone face-to-face	56	60	61	61	61
A local service	52	54	56	55	56
Speaking to someone on the phone	38	32	39	35	41
Information on which organisations can help	37	31	33	33	34
Providing a standard form for calculating maintenance	37	44	52	41	59
Providing a website	36	26	23	16	28
Neutral information and guidance	27	34	26	26	26
One central service	22	22	22	17	26
More information for PWCs	22	11	37	31	40
More information for NRPs	14	39	15	13	16
Other	2	3	1	1	2
No area	2	2	3	5	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>627</i>	<i>470</i>	<i>620</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>370</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>627</i>	<i>467</i>	<i>621</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>395</i>

Base: All parents.

Non-CSA PWCs who received child maintenance, were more likely to mention several improvements that could be made compared to those who did not receive child maintenance (see Table 7.24). For example, 49 per cent of those receiving maintenance thought a standard form for calculating maintenance would be useful, compared to 29 per cent of those not receiving maintenance. As discussed earlier these are the parents who have made successful private arrangements and, as such, their suggestions may come from experience of what would have helped them when they were setting up their arrangements. There were no major differences between the CSA parents that received and did not receive maintenance.

Table 7.23 Areas the Government should focus on to ensure that separating parents get the help they need to make private arrangements – non-CSA PWC only, by whether received maintenance

	Non-CSA PWCs	
	Received maintenance %	Did not receive maintenance %
Speaking to someone face-to-face	62	51
Providing a local service	53	50
Providing a standard form for calculating maintenance	49	29
Speaking to someone on the phone	49	32
Providing a website	45	30
Information on which organisations can help me	42	34
Offering neutral information and guidance	33	23
Providing one central service	24	20
Providing more information for PWCs	20	23
Providing more information for NRPs	15	13
Other	1	3
No area	1	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	224	354
<i>Unweighted base</i>	224	354

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

7.6 What do non-Child Support Agency non-resident parents think about private arrangements?

Overall it appeared that the non-CSA NRPs tended to be in favour of private arrangements and felt confident about the possibility of making their own arrangements.

The majority (68 per cent) thought that parents should make child maintenance arrangements between themselves and when they cannot agree they should turn to the courts (58 per cent). The factors that they thought would help parents to make private arrangements tended to relate to family circumstances such as being in a good financial situation (70 per cent), the NRP having contact with the children (62 per cent) and the parents having a friendly relationship (61 per cent). However, they also thought that help from outside – someone to help parents negotiate between themselves (68 per cent) – could be helpful too.

They were very positive about private arrangements, with all of the advantages suggested (shown in Table 7.5) being mentioned by at least half of non-CSA NRPs. Some of the key benefits they saw to private arrangements were that they were

quicker and easier than other types of arrangement (76 per cent), gave parents more control over the amount of maintenance paid (64 per cent), helped reduce conflict (59 per cent) and were more private (57 per cent). The main disadvantages mentioned were that they might cause conflict (62 per cent), that the NRP might not be willing or able to pay (58 per cent) and that the parents needed to have a good relationship (57 per cent).

Over half (50 per cent) said that they would feel confident or very confident in making their own private arrangements using improved information and guidance services. Of those that did not already have a private arrangement, 70 per cent said they would be likely or very like to make a private arrangement if they had the help of a trained, impartial adviser.

The three key areas that the non-CSA NRPs thought the Government should focus on in order to help parents make their own private arrangements were: providing someone who parents can talk to face-to-face (61 per cent), providing a standard form for calculating maintenance (55 per cent) and providing neutral information and advice (54 per cent).

7.7 Summary

- Around half of non-CSA PWCs (49 per cent) and CSA NRPs (53 per cent) thought parents should make maintenance arrangements between themselves. The CSA PWCs had a different view: More than half (54 per cent) thought that parents should make maintenance arrangements with the help of a Government agency.
- Those parents who thought separated parents should agree between themselves were asked who parents should turn to if they cannot make arrangements between themselves. Responses for all three parent groups were roughly evenly split between those who thought parents should turn to a Government agency and those who thought parents should turn to the courts.
- Key factors that parents thought would facilitate the making of private arrangements were related to access to help:
 - someone to help parents work out how much maintenance to pay and receive (56 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs and 61 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - someone to help parents negotiate between themselves (55 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 57 per cent of CSA NRPs and 50 per cent of CSA PWCs).
- And linked to the relationship between the parents, such as:
 - having a friendly relationship (54 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 44 per cent of CSA NRPs and 39 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - being in a good financial situation (49 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 46 per cent of CSA NRPs and 30 per cent of CSA PWCs).

- The main advantages that parents thought there were to making private arrangements were:
 - that they were quicker and easier (63 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 61 per cent of CSA NRPs and 48 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - that they helped reduce conflict (55 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 44 per cent of CSA NRPs and 35 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - that they were more private (45 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 50 per cent of CSA NRPs and 33 per cent of CSA PWCs)
- CSA PWCs were more negative than other parents, however – 24 per cent of them said that there were no advantages to making private arrangements, compared to six per cent of non-CSA PWCs and nine per cent of CSA NRPs.
- The main disadvantages that parents thought there were to making private arrangements were:
 - that the NRP might not be willing or able to pay (61 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 56 per cent of CSA NRPs and 74 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - that they may cause conflict (54 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 56 per cent of CSA NRPs and 62 per cent of CSA PWCs);
 - that there needs to be a good relationship between the parents (51 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 56 per cent of CSA NRPs and 53 per cent of CSA PWCs)
- Non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs were fairly confident that they would be able to use new information and guidance services to make a private arrangement: 47 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 56 per cent of CSA NRPs said that they would be confident or very confident in making a private arrangement in this way. CSA PWCs were less confident, 64 per cent said that they would be not confident or not at all confident about making an arrangement in this way.
- CSA NRPs were the most confident when it came to the possibility of making a private arrangement if they had access to a trained, impartial adviser: 42 per cent said they would be very likely to try to make an arrangement in this way, compared to 23 per cent of non-CSA PWCs and 22 per cent of CSA PWCs.
- Reasons why parents did not want to use an adviser in this way, for the non-CSA PWCs, related to not knowing where their ex-partners were (41 per cent) and for CSA parents, related to the quality of their relationships with their ex-partners, such as worries about causing conflict (56 per cent of CSA NRPs and 58 per cent of CSA PWCs mentioned this).
- The key changes that parents thought the Government should focus on in relation to the provision of information and support were being able to speak to someone face-to-face (56 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 60 per cent of CSA NRPs and 61 per cent of CSA PWCs) and offering a local service (52 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 54 per cent of CSA NRPs and 56 per cent of CSA PWCs).

8 Parents' views on the mechanics of the new statutory system

8.1 Introduction

As was seen in the previous chapter, the main difference between the current child support scheme and the proposed new child maintenance system is the greater emphasis on encouraging private agreements. Although the requirement that parents with care (PWCs) who receive Income Support (IS) (or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)) should go through a Government agency is to be abolished, it is recognised that there will remain a place for a Government child maintenance service (the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC)). The operational difficulties faced by C-MEC's predecessor, the Child Support Agency (CSA), are well known and have included problems relating to both obtaining and processing information on parents' financial circumstances. The child maintenance system envisaged under the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Bill 2008 includes a number of changes to the mechanics of the new system which are designed to simplify the calculation process and so to improve overall compliance. As in the existing post-2003 new scheme, only the NRP's income will be used in the child maintenance calculation in future. However, in the reformed scheme assessments will be based on historic gross income and not current net income and such information will be obtained direct from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) rather than from parents themselves. Other reforms include changes to the range of sanctions available for enforcing child maintenance calculations. In parallel with the redesign of the child maintenance scheme, the Government has also brought forward separate proposals to encourage joint birth registration for children.

8.1.1 Plan of chapter

In this chapter the attitudes and likely responses of separated parents to these various changes are explored. First their views on the desirability of joint birth registration are reported. The chapter then looks at whether or not separated parents were likely to use the new Government child maintenance agency for calculation, collection and enforcement purposes. In Section 8.4, the potential effects of changes in child maintenance arrangements, including the higher maintenance disregard, for benefit claimants are considered. In the last two main sections, parents' views on the use of gross, rather than net, income and on the automatic transfer of income data from HMRC to C-MEC, as well as about enforcement issues, are analysed. As with previous chapters, the non-CSA NRPs are reported at the end of the chapter.

8.2 Views on joint birth registration

In parallel with the changes to child maintenance arrangements, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has issued a consultation paper exploring options for changes to the birth registration system and in particular on the desirability of encouraging more joint registration of births (DWP, 2007b). It has also published research on the birth registration practices and motivations of unmarried parents (Graham *et al.*, 2007). In the present study – which covers both married and unmarried couples – parents were asked both about how their children had been registered and on their attitudes towards the principle of joint birth registration.

8.2.1 Parental practice on joint birth registration

First separated parents were asked whose name (or names) had been registered as a parent on their child's birth certificate. In the great majority of cases – eight in ten cases or more – the names of both parents had been registered (89 per cent of CSA non-resident parents (NRPs), 84 per cent of CSA PWCs and 79 per cent of non-CSA PWCs). Non-CSA PWCs (20 per cent) were more likely than CSA PWCs (15 per cent) to have registered the child's birth in their name only.

Table 8.1 Name(s) registered on child's birth certificate, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Respondent's name only	20	2	15
Ex-partner's name only	1	9	1
Both names registered	79	89	84
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>560</i>	<i>416</i>	<i>607</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>560</i>	<i>408</i>	<i>608</i>

Base: All parents.⁴¹

As expected, the status of the parents' previous relationship was strongly associated with the incidence of joint birth registration. This is shown in Table 8.2, which shows birth registration practices as reported by CSA PWCs. Joint birth registration was the norm where the CSA PWC had previously lived together with the ex-partner, whether as a married (98 per cent) or unmarried (88 per cent) couple. Conversely, where the parents had not lived together, registration in the respondent's (typically the mother's) name alone was much more common. Four in ten (unmarried couple not living together: 41 per cent, not a couple: 40 per cent) had opted for sole registration. Similar trends were evident among CSA NRPs and also non-CSA PWCs (where in fact a majority of those who had not lived with their partner were sole registrants). Household income did not appear to have a significant effect on the likelihood of joint birth registration.

Table 8.2 Name(s) registered on child's birth certificate by CSA PWCs, by nature of previous relationship with ex-partner

	Married couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, not living together %	Not a couple %	Total ¹ %
Respondent's name only	1	11	41	40	15
Ex-partner's name only	*	1	3	0	1
Both names registered	98	88	56	60	84
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>607</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>608</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs.

¹ Total includes 12 PWCs who fell outside the four sub-groups shown in the table.

⁴¹ Due to a program error the base is lower than elsewhere for the non-CSA PWCs. See Section 1.3.4 for more information.

8.2.2 Parental doubts over paternity

Parents were also asked whether either they or their ex-partners had at any time been concerned about the paternity of the first child of their relationship. This had been an issue for one in ten CSA NRPs (ten per cent) and CSA PWCs (eight per cent). CSA PWCs were twice as likely as non-CSA PWCs (four per cent) to express such doubts (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3 Whether either parent was concerned about paternity of first child of relationship, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Yes, concern over paternity	4	10	8
No concern over paternity	96	90	92
<i>Weighted base</i>	558	427	608
<i>Unweighted base</i>	558	421	609

Base: All parents.

In line with the findings reported in Table 8.2, those parents who had not lived together were much more likely to have such doubts. For example, 21 per cent of CSA PWCs who either had not lived with their ex-partners or did not see themselves as a couple, expressed such concerns, as compared with just one per cent of those who had been married and previously lived together (Table 8.4).

Table 8.4 Whether CSA PWCs reported that either parent had been concerned about paternity of first child of relationship, by nature of previous relationship with ex-partner

	Married couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, not living together %	Not a couple %	Total ¹ %
Yes, concern over paternity	1	8	21	21	8
No concern over paternity	99	92	79	79	92
<i>Weighted base</i>	229	225	111	29	608
<i>Unweighted base</i>	250	215	105	27	609

Base: All CSA PWCs.

¹ Total includes 12 PWCs who fell outside the four sub-groups shown in the table.

In those cases where there had been doubts over paternity, parents were asked whether a paternity test had ever been carried out. The results are shown in Table 8.5. The difference in responses between the two CSA client groups may

support the view that the CSA NRP sample in this study tended to draw on NRPs who had had more stable relationships with their former partners.

Table 8.5 Whether paternity test carried out where there had been concerns, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Yes, paternity test undertaken	19	27	54
No paternity test undertaken	81	73	46
<i>Weighted base</i>	[21]	[43]	51
<i>Unweighted base</i>	[21]	[45]	52

Base: All parents where there was a doubt over paternity.

8.2.3 Parental views on joint birth registration

As well as asking parents about what happened as regards the birth registration of their own children, they were also asked whether they thought, as a matter of principle, the father's name should always appear on a child's birth certificate. A clear majority in all three groups agreed or strongly agreed with this proposition (63 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 71 per cent of CSA PWCs and 84 per cent of CSA NRPs). The results are shown in Table 8.6. Not surprisingly, CSA NRPs were the group most likely to agree strongly with this view (61 per cent).

Table 8.6 Whether father's name should always be on child's birth certificate, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Strongly agree	36	61	47
Agree	27	23	24
Neither agree nor disagree	19	11	16
Disagree	12	4	8
Strongly disagree	6	2	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	647	478	627
<i>Unweighted base</i>	647	476	629

Base: All parents.

The nature of respondents' previous relationships with their ex-partners was positively associated with views on joint birth registration. Both non-CSA and CSA PWCs who had previously been married were more likely to agree with the view that the father's name should appear on the child's birth certificate than those PWCs who had not been married.

For example, three-quarters (75 per cent) of formerly married non-CSA PWCs agreed or strongly agreed with the principle of joint registration, compared to 60 per cent of those who had been members of unmarried cohabiting couples. Similarly, about a quarter (27 per cent) of non-CSA PWCs who had been a member of an unmarried couple and who had not lived with their ex-partner disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposition, as against just nine per cent who had been married and lived together (Table 8.7).

A similar pattern was evident among CSA PWCs; the equivalent proportions who disagreed were 19 per cent (previously unmarried and not living together) and eight per cent (previously married and living together). In contrast, and as expected, a clear majority of CSA NRPs, irrespective of their former marital status, agreed that the father's name should appear on the child's birth certificate.

Table 8.7 Whether father's name should always be on child's birth certificate according to non-CSA PWCs, by nature of previous relationship with ex-partner

	Married couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, living together %	Unmarried couple, not living together %	Not a couple %	Total ¹ %
Strongly agree	44	36	31	18	37
Agree	31	24	23	13	26
Neither agree nor disagree	16	17	20	30	18
Disagree	5	17	17	21	12
Strongly disagree	4	5	10	18	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>285</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>606</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>285</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>606</i>

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

¹ Total includes six PWCs who fell outside the four sub-groups shown in the table.

Parents who agreed that the father's name should go on the child's birth certificate were then asked why they took that view and similarly for those who disagreed. In each case parents were given a range of possible reasons (and were able to give more than one reason). For those who agreed that the father's name should always be included, the three most common reasons given across all three groups were because:

- the child will then know the father's name;
- fathers are as important as mothers;
- it will encourage fathers to take more responsibility for their children.

Predictably, CSA NRPs were more likely to say that fathers were as important as mothers (79 per cent) than either non-CSA or CSA PWCs (68 and 69 per cent respectively) (Table 8.8).

Table 8.8 Reasons why father's name should always be on child's birth certificate, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Child will know father's name	80	78	76
Fathers are as important as mothers	68	79	69
It will encourage fathers to take more responsibility for their children	61	64	60
Fathers won't be able to say the child isn't theirs if the relationship ends	48	50	56
Most fathers will want their name on the certificate	42	54	42
It will make it easier for a Government agency to find the father if he needs to pay child maintenance in the future	42	41	50
Other	1	2	1
None	0	0	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>405</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>442</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>405</i>	<i>394</i>	<i>452</i>

Base: All parents who agreed that father's name should always be on child's birth certificate.

For those who disagreed with the idea that the father's name should always be included on a child's birth certificate, the three most common reasons given by PWCs were:

- the fear of the risk of violence;
- not knowing who the father was;
- not wanting to name the father.

Each of these reasons was given by at least half of both non-CSA PWCs and CSA PWCs who disagreed (Table 8.9). The base number of the sub-group of CSA NRPs for this question was too small to test for significant differences.

Table 8.9 Reasons why father's name should not always be on child's birth certificate, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Mothers may be worried about the risk of violence from the father	58	[60]	62
Mothers may not know who the father is	53	[63]	57
Mothers may not want to name the father	52	[44]	53
Mothers may not want the father to know that the child is his	35	[50]	32
Mothers may not want the child to know who the father is	32	[48]	38
Fathers shouldn't have to put their name on when they aren't sure the child is theirs	32	[62]	42
Fathers should have a choice whether to put their name on	20	[21]	24
Fathers shouldn't have to put their name on because another man might raise the child	14	[12]	22
Other	10	[11]	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>80</i>

Base: All parents who disagreed that father's name should always be on child's birth certificate.

8.3 Role of Government in the calculation of maintenance levels

In the previous chapter the attitudes of separated parents towards the new emphasis on private arrangements were reported. Clearly, within any new scheme there will remain an important role for the Government child maintenance agency. This section examines the likelihood of parents using the new agency for assessment and then for collection and enforcement. It also considers the likely effect of charging fees. The possible effect of the abolition of the requirement that PWCs on benefit use the CSA is discussed further in the following section.

8.3.1 Likelihood of using the new agency for assessment

Parents were asked how likely they were to ask the proposed new Government agency to help calculate the amount of child maintenance that should be paid, rather than working out an amount themselves (Table 8.10). Given the problems the CSA has faced in recent years, it is noteworthy that around two-thirds or more of the CSA's existing clientele said that they are likely or very likely to use the new

organisation (84 per cent of CSA PWCs and 65 per cent of CSA NRPs). CSA PWCs who were not on benefit were more inclined than those on benefit to say that they are very likely to use C-MEC (54 per cent compared to 40 per cent). Overall, about one in six CSA PWCs (16 per cent) thought that they were either unlikely or very unlikely to use C-MEC for assessment purposes. This pattern of responses is similar to that reported by Coleman *et al.* (2007: 46).

Non-CSA PWCs were much less likely to avail themselves of the services of the new agency: only about half (48 per cent) considered this to be likely or very likely.

Table 8.10 Likelihood of using C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Very likely	19	25	48	40	54
Likely	29	40	36	41	32
Unlikely	22	17	7	9	5
Very unlikely	31	17	9	10	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	635	468	620	251	370
<i>Unweighted base</i>	635	465	622	228	394

Base: All parents.

The status of the parents' previous relationships with their ex-partners did not appear to make any significant difference to the likelihood that they would ask C-MEC to assess the level of maintenance payable. However, the likelihood of C-MEC being used for this purpose in the context of the quality of the parents' present relationship was also examined. As expected, the more difficult the parties' current relationship with their ex-partners, the more likely it is that they will turn to C-MEC for help with working out the amount of maintenance to be paid.

For example, 55 per cent of CSA PWCs whose relationship with their ex-partners was not friendly, were very likely to use the new agency, as against 40 per cent of those who are on friendly terms (Table 8.11). Further analysis revealed a similar pattern among both non-CSA PWCs (34 per cent of those not on friendly terms were very likely to use C-MEC, compared with 15 per cent of those on friendly terms) and CSA NRPs (30 per cent of those not on friendly terms were very likely to use C-MEC, compared to 18 per cent of those on friendly terms).

Table 8.11 Likelihood of CSA PWCs using C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable, by quality of current relationship with ex-partner

	Very or quite friendly %	Neither friendly nor unfriendly %	Not very friendly or not at all friendly %	No current contact with ex-partner %	Total %
Very likely	40	47	55	53	48
Likely	37	42	31	31	36
Unlikely	11	7	3	7	7
Very unlikely	11	4	11	9	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>158</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>620</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>622</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs.

The likelihood of the parents in the five family 'types' using C-MEC for the assessment of amount of maintenance was also examined. Tables 8.12 to 8.13 show that, as would be expected, there appears to be a link with contact and the likelihood of using the service:

- those who had the most contact and were most happy with the level of contact – the 'happy contact' type – were the least likely of the groups to want to use C-MEC in this way;
- for the non-CSA PWCs 'no contact at all' were also less likely than the other types to use C-MEC to calculate maintenance level. As discussed in Section 6.2.2 parents in this group were more likely to have chosen not to use the CSA because they did not want maintenance from their ex-partners, so it is fairly likely that this is also the reason why more than half of them would not use C-MEC either;
- for the CSA PWCs there were no differences between the five types of families – they were keen to use C-MEC to calculate maintenance levels.

A regression model was also carried out to predict how likely parents were to use C-MEC in this way. Details of the regression can be found in the Appendix. The regression, as with the ones discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, included the following variables:

- the number of relevant children;
- the age of the youngest child;
- the age of the mother when the oldest child was born;
- whether or not either parent has re-partnered;

- the working status of the NRP;
- the levels of poverty within the household;
- the distance between the parents' homes;
- whether or not CSA parents were in benefit cases.

Even after accounting for variation in these demographic variables the findings above remain the same. However, one variable that was important was the level of poverty within the household – parents who had higher levels of poverty were more likely to want to use C-MEC to calculate maintenance – even after accounting for the differences between the five family 'types'.

Table 8.12 Likelihood of using C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable – non-CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

	1	2	3	4	5
	Happy contact	Absolutely no contact	Unhappy contact	No face-to-face contact	Contact with children
Very likely and likely	42	42	67	61	[50]
Very unlikely and unlikely	58	58	33	39	[50]
<i>Weighted base</i>	272	165	95	51	14
<i>Unweighted base</i>	272	165	95	51	14

Base: All non-CSA PWCs.

Table 8.13 Likelihood of using C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable – CSA NRPs only, by typology of separated families

	1	2	3	4	5
	Happy contact	Absolutely no contact	Unhappy contact	No face-to-face contact	Contact with children
Very likely and likely	58	74	76	68	[72]
Very unlikely and unlikely	42	26	24	32	[28]
<i>Weighted base</i>	188	87	97	64	21
<i>Unweighted base</i>	174	78	106	70	26

Base: All CSA NRPs.

Table 8.14 Likelihood of using C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable – CSA PWCs only, by typology of separated families

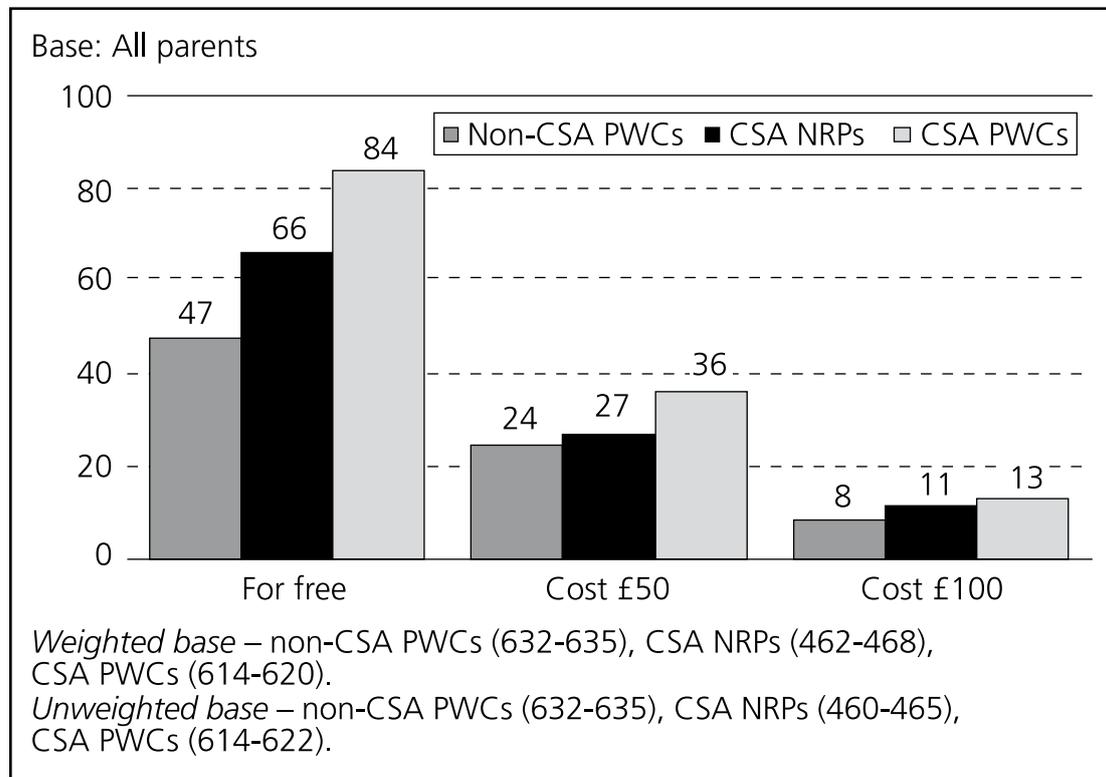
	1	2	3	4	5
	Happy contact	Absolutely no contact	Unhappy contact	No face-to-face contact	Contact with children
Very likely and likely	58	74	76	68	[72]
Very unlikely and unlikely	42	26	24	32	[28]
<i>Weighted base</i>	188	87	97	64	21
<i>Unweighted base</i>	174	78	106	70	26

Base: All CSA PWCs.

8.4 Likelihood of using the new agency for calculation if a fee is charged

Charging a flat rate fee for the initial calculation would have an impact on parents' interest in using the agency to calculate maintenance owed (Figure 8.1). The proportion of parents stating they were very likely or likely to use the agency in this way clearly reduced as the cost of making a calculation increased. Charging had a particularly significant impact on CSA PWCs on benefits – only 24 per cent said they would be very likely or likely to use the agency to calculate the maintenance level if the charge was £50, compared to 43 per cent of non-benefit cases and once the charge was raised to £100, this proportion had decreased to four per cent of PWCs on benefits compared to 19 per cent of their non-benefit counterparts.

Figure 8.1 Likelihood of using agency (very likely or likely) for working out maintenance level, if cost was nothing, £50 and £100



8.4.1 Likelihood of using the new agency for collection

PWCs were also asked about the likelihood of their using C-MEC for the collection and enforcement of child maintenance, as distinct from the assessment process (Table 8.12). The pattern of responses is similar to that shown in Table 8.10. More than four in ten CSA PWCs (44 per cent) were very likely to use C-MEC for collection and enforcement, compared to only one in ten non-CSA PWCs (11 per cent). Similarly, more CSA PWCs in private cases (49 per cent) than those in benefit cases (36 per cent) were very likely to use the new agency. Overall, approaching a quarter of all CSA PWCs (23 per cent) were either unlikely or very unlikely to use C-MEC for collection and/or enforcement.

Table 8.15 Likelihood of using C-MEC for collection and enforcement of maintenance, by status of PWC

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Very likely	11	44	36	49
Likely	20	33	38	30
Unlikely	24	11	13	10
Very unlikely	45	12	13	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>633</i>	<i>619</i>	<i>251</i>	<i>369</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>633</i>	<i>620</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>393</i>

Base: All PWCs.

Those CSA PWCs who were not currently receiving child maintenance payments were more likely than those who are in receipt of maintenance to be very likely to use the new body. For example, 56 per cent of those who had been informed that they should be getting maintenance but were not doing so, were very likely to use C-MEC for collection and enforcement, compared to 39 per cent of those CSA PWCs who were currently in receipt of maintenance (Table 8.13). This suggests that C-MEC is likely to inherit a considerable proportion of the more problematic cases in the CSA's existing caseload.

Table 8.16 Likelihood of CSA PWCs using C-MEC for collection and enforcement of maintenance, by whether maintenance received

	PWC informed should be receiving maintenance via CSA but is not %	PWC not informed should be receiving maintenance via CSA and is not %	PWC now receives maintenance via CSA %	Total %
Very likely	56	[52]	39	44
Likely	23	[17]	38	33
Unlikely	10	[13]	12	11
Very unlikely	11	[18]	11	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>619</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>620</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs.

As with the issue of assessment, the status of the parents' previous relationship did not appear to make any significant difference to the likelihood that they would ask C-MEC to collect and enforce child maintenance. However, the quality of the parents' **current** relationship was again directly associated with the likelihood of C-MEC being used for this purpose. For example, 57 per cent of CSA PWCs with a negative relationship with their ex-partner were very likely to use the new agency, against only 25 per cent of those who were on friendly terms (Table 8.14). A similar pattern was also evident among non-CSA PWCs (20 per cent of those not on friendly terms were very likely to use C-MEC, compared to ten per cent of those on friendly terms).

Table 8.17 Likelihood of CSA PWCs using C-MEC for collection and enforcement of maintenance, by quality of current relationship with ex-partner

	Very or quite friendly %	Neither friendly nor unfriendly %	Not very friendly or not at all friendly %	No current contact with ex-partner %	Total %
Very likely	25	39	57	56	44
Likely	38	45	22	28	33
Unlikely	18	10	10	6	11
Very unlikely	19	5	11	10	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>178</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>619</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>190</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>620</i>

Base: All CSA PWCs.

There is, however, one notable difference between the responses shown in Tables 8.11 and 8.17. Those CSA PWCs who were on either very or quite friendly terms with their ex-partners were much more likely to use C-MEC for the purposes of assessment (40 per cent) than they were for collection and enforcement (25 per cent). In contrast, there is no significant difference between the proportions of those with either poor or non-existent current relationships who were very likely to do so. This is to be expected – those on good terms with their former partner may well welcome official involvement in the setting of an appropriate maintenance level but by definition, are less likely to need assistance with collection and enforcement.

8.5 Changes for benefit claimants

8.5.1 Abolition of requirement to apply for child maintenance

The reform programme now underway includes the abolition of the requirement that CSA PWCs on benefits must use the CSA. Therefore, these parents were specifically asked about what they would do in relation to their child maintenance arrangements if they no longer had to use a Government agency. Forty-four per cent said they would try to use a Government agency, 32 per cent said they would try to make a private arrangement and 24 per cent said they would probably not make any arrangements. This finding is broadly consistent with that reported in the study by Coleman *et al.* (2007: 26), which suggested that 42 per cent of PWCs on benefit would use C-MEC and 36 per cent would make their own arrangements. In that study, however, respondents were not given the option of answering that they would make no arrangements (although 11 per cent were reported as 'don't know').

8.5.2 Views on benefit disregard

The planned reforms also include an increase in the amount of child maintenance that a PWC on IS can keep before it affects their benefit entitlement (the 'disregard'). All separated parents (not just PWCs and not just those on benefits) were asked for their views on the desirability of a benefit disregard. Parents were given three options. The first was that PWCs who received social security benefits should keep **all** their maintenance payments on top of their benefits ('the full disregard policy'). The second was that PWCs on benefits should keep **some** of their maintenance on top of their social security ('the partial disregard policy'). The third and final option was that the Government should keep all the maintenance paid in such cases in order to cover the cost of social security benefits paid to PWCs ('the full recovery policy').

Most parents supported either the full or partial disregard policy with only a small minority supporting the full recovery policy (at most 15 per cent, among CSA NRPs). As expected, CSA PWCs on benefit were the group most likely to support a full disregard (64 per cent) (a similar pattern of responses was observed with CSA NRPs whose ex-partners were on benefits). There was no significant difference in the level of support for a full disregard between non-CSA PWCs (47 per cent) and CSA non-benefit PWCs (45 per cent).

Table 8.18 Views on desirability of a benefit disregard, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Parents with care on benefit should keep all their maintenance payments	47	49	53	64	45
Parents with care on benefit should keep some of their maintenance payments	43	36	38	31	43
The Government should keep all the money to cover the costs of benefit payments	10	15	9	4	13
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>615</i>	<i>457</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>252</i>	<i>358</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>615</i>	<i>455</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>229</i>	<i>383</i>

Base: All parents.

8.5.3 Perceived impact of receipt of child maintenance and benefit disregard on employment

Non-CSA PWCs who did not have a maintenance arrangement in place and were not currently in work were asked if they would consider moving into paid work if they received regular child maintenance payments. Half of this group (50 per cent) said that they would consider paid employment in that situation (weighted base: 149).

CSA PWCs who were not currently in work were then asked about what likely effect a full disregard for child maintenance payments in the benefits system would have on them. Around three-quarters (74 per cent) said that it would make no difference to whether they looked for work or stayed on benefits (weighted base: 238). A further 17 per cent were more likely to look for work and nine per cent were more likely to stay on benefits.

CSA PWCs who were currently in work were also asked about the likely effect on them of a full disregard for child maintenance payments in the benefits system. Around six in ten (58 per cent) said that it would make no difference to them; about a third (34 per cent) were more likely to stay in work and nine per cent were more likely to stop work and go on benefits (weighted base: 301).

Overall, these results suggest that a full maintenance disregard in the benefits system is likely to operate as a disincentive to labour market participation for, at most, about one in ten of all CSA PWCs. While it may make no difference to the majority of all CSA PWCs, it could act as an incentive for a significant minority – albeit arguably more in terms of **staying in work** (34 per cent) than **getting into work** (17 per cent).

8.5 Views on basis of income assessment and access to information from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs

The child support scheme in place since March 2003 uses the NRP's current net weekly income as the basis for the maintenance calculation. The system also relies heavily on parents providing information to the CSA. The proposed reforms include using gross income from the last available tax year as the basis for assessments and enabling C-MEC to obtain information on incomes direct from HMRC, without asking the NRP first.

8.5.1 Views on use of gross or net incomes as basis of assessment

Parents were asked for their views on the appropriate basis of the income assessment for child maintenance calculations. Parents were given four options to choose from: These were that maintenance calculations should be based on either net income or gross income or that it did not matter so long as the amount was the same or it did not matter so long as the assessment was done quickly. Spontaneous alternative responses were also recorded as 'it depends on the circumstances'.

Among all groups, the most often preferred option was using net income. Indeed, six in ten CSA NRPs (61 per cent) selected this method. CSA PWCs were the least enthusiastic adherents to this view (35 per cent) but this was still the most favoured option even among this group (Table 8.19).

CSA PWCs (21 per cent) were more likely than non-CSA PWCs (12 per cent) to opt for a gross income basis to assessments. This reflects the fact that one in four CSA PWCs (25 per cent) not on benefit chose this option. This relatively high proportion, in turn, presumably reflects the greater likelihood of CSA PWCs not on benefit doubting whether after-tax income is a true indication of the NRP's ability to pay child maintenance. In contrast, only one in 20 CSA NRPs (five per cent) preferred the gross income basis. As the new rules will have the most effect on NRPs, this suggests that attention will need to be given to explaining to C-MEC clients, and especially NRPs, the rationale for the change to a gross income basis.

Table 8.19 Views on whether gross or net income should be used in maintenance calculations, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Income after tax should be used to calculate child maintenance (net income)	43	61	35	40	32
Income before tax should be used to calculate child maintenance (gross income)	12	5	21	15	25
It does not matter so long as the amount is the same	30	26	28	28	27
It does not matter so long as it is assessed quickly	11	4	15	14	15
It depends on the circumstances	4	5	2	2	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	636	470	622	250	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	636	468	624	227	397

Base: All parents.

8.5.2 Views on direct transfer of income data from HMRC to C-MEC

Parents were also asked whether Government agencies such as C-MEC should be able to obtain information on how much an NRP earns from HMRC, instead of asking the parent concerned directly. As expected, there was a stark contrast between the responses of PWCs and NRPs, as shown by Table 8.20.

PWCs tended to agree strongly with the direct transfer of income data from HMRC to C-MEC. CSA PWCs (66 per cent) were more likely to adopt this view than non-CSA PWCs (40 per cent). This presumably reflects the fact that the latter group tends to have better relationships with their ex-partners and so are less inclined to believe that the direct exchange of personal data between Government agencies is justified. This interpretation is supported by the marked difference between the proportion of CSA PWCs not on benefit (72 per cent) who take the same view, as compared to CSA PWCs on benefits (57 per cent), as many of the former subgroup will have become CSA clients only because they could not agree a private arrangement with their ex-partner. Likewise, further analysis showed that 74 per cent of CSA PWCs who now had poor relationships with their ex-partners agreed strongly that C-MEC should obtain income data direct from HMRC, as against 55 per cent of CSA PWCs who still had friendly relationships with the other parent.

Table 8.20 Whether respondent agrees that C-MEC should obtain income information from HMRC rather than directly from the NRP, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %	CSA benefit PWCs %	CSA non- benefit PWCs %
Strongly agree	40	19	66	57	72
Agree	35	33	23	28	20
Neither agree nor disagree	14	17	7	10	5
Disagree	9	18	3	4	2
Strongly disagree	2	13	1	*	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	641	477	624	252	372
<i>Unweighted base</i>	641	475	625	228	397

Base: All parents.

CSA NRPs as a whole were much more ambivalent about the idea of HMRC passing income data direct to C-MEC; only one in five (19 per cent) strongly agreed, although a further third (33 per cent) agreed with the proposition. However, a similar proportion (31 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the direct exchange of such personal information between Government agencies. This contrasts with just four per cent of CSA PWCs who were opposed to the idea.

Those parents who agreed with the direct transfer of income data from HMRC to C-MEC were asked why they took this view. Parents were given a range of possible reasons (and were able to give more than one reason). The most common explanation – given by three-quarters or more of all three groups – was that it would stop parents being able to lie about how much they earned. The results are shown in Table 8.21. As expected, CSA PWCs were especially likely to take this view (93 per cent) when compared with CSA NRPs (74 per cent).

Table 8.21 Reasons given by parents who agree that C-MEC should obtain income information from HMRC rather than directly from the NRP, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
It would stop parents from being able to lie about how much they earn	86	74	93
It would stop parents from refusing to say how much they earn	64	60	67
It would be more accurate to ask HMRC than the parent	62	55	68
It would be fairer as all parents' incomes would be treated in the same way	58	53	57
It would be less hassle for the parent if the information comes from HMRC	46	47	46
Other	*	1	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	484	249	555
<i>Unweighted base</i>	484	252	562

Base: All parents who agreed that HMRC should supply data direct to C-MEC.

Those parents who disagreed with the idea that HMRC should be able to transfer income data direct to C-MEC were then asked for their reasons. Again, parents were given a range of possible reasons (and were able to give more than one reason). The most common reasons given were associated with concerns over privacy or assumptions of dishonesty, as seen in Table 8.22. The base number of the sub-group of CSA PWCs for this question was too small to test for significant differences.

Table 8.22 Reasons given by parents who disagree that C-MEC should obtain income information from HMRC rather than directly from the NRP, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
It will take more time to have to go through HMRC than to ask the parent directly	21	27	26
A parent might be earning money 'cash in hand', which HMRC does not know about	18	18	41
How much the parent earns is private	46	38	44
It assumes parents will be dishonest	32	44	22
You cannot trust HMRC to provide accurate information on incomes	15	35	28
Other	15	8	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	68	143	[24]
<i>Unweighted base</i>	68	136	[23]

Base: All parents who agreed that HMRC should supply data direct to C-MEC.

8.6 Views on debt collection and enforcement rules

The CSA already has a range of enforcement options available to it to deal with persistent non-payers, culminating in the possibility of asking the court to impose a sentence of imprisonment or (since 2003) to impose a driving licence disqualification in the most serious cases. The current proposals include a number of further sanctions to deal with the most difficult cases, including withdrawal of passports and curfew orders. The CSA has also experimented with a 'name and shame' policy, as for a time it listed on its website the names of NRPs who had been convicted of offences under the child support legislation.⁴²

8.6.1 Parents' views on enforcement options

Separated parents were shown a range of enforcement options which might be used if NRPs assessed under a Government child maintenance service repeatedly failed to make payments or tried to avoid payment. They were also asked which of the options listed they thought would be the most effective means of encouraging NRPs to comply with their child maintenance obligations. A clear majority in all three groups believed that direct deduction from salary would be the most effective method (76 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 65 per cent of CSA PWCs and 70 per cent of NRPs) (Table 8.23). It is noteworthy that direct deduction from salary was supported by a significant majority of NRPs as an enforcement tool.

⁴² This pilot has since ended.

In addition, one in seven CSA clients took the view that a prison sentence was the most effective sanction (14 per cent of CSA PWCs and 13 per cent of CSA NRPs). Further analysis revealed that although only eight per cent of non-CSA PWCs preferred this most punitive sanction, this proportion rose to 13 per cent (on a par with CSA clients) among those whose current relationship with their ex-partner was not very, or not at all, friendly. There was very little support across all three groups for the withdrawal of passports or the imposition of curfew orders as being the most effective sanction.

Table 8.23 Parents' views as to the most effective enforcement sanction, by PWC and NRP status

	Non-CSA PWCs %	CSA NRPs %	CSA PWCs %
Direct deduction from salary	76	70	65
Prison sentence	8	13	14
'Name and shame'	3	4	3
Withdrawal of driving licence	2	2	5
Withdrawal of passport	2	1	2
Curfew order	1	2	1
Fine	8	7	9
Other	1	1	*
None of the above	0	0	*
<i>Weighted base</i>	362	213	481
<i>Unweighted base</i>	362	212	482

Base: All parents who expressed a positive view about any of these sanctions.

8.7 Non-Child Support Agency non-resident parents

As explained in Section 1.4, the limited size of the sample of non-CSA NRPs means that they have not been included in the comparative analysis in the rest of this chapter. Here, the key findings from the non-CSA NRPs are briefly summarised.

Nearly all non-CSA NRPs (96 per cent) reported that both parents' names were on the child's birth certificate. There had been concerns about paternity for three per cent of this group but a paternity test carried out in only one case. Around eight out of ten were either unlikely (23 per cent) or very unlikely (53 per cent) to use a new Government child maintenance agency. About half (53 per cent) supported a full benefit disregard and a further four in ten (38 per cent) agreed with a partial disregard for child maintenance received by PWCs on benefit.

Six in ten (59 per cent) thought that child maintenance calculations should be based on net income; a further quarter (26 per cent) said that it did not matter whether net or gross income was used so long as the final amount was the same.

The majority of non-CSA NRPs also took the view that C-MEC should be able to obtain income data direct from HMRC (25 per cent strongly agreed, 35 per cent agreed). Eight in ten (81 per cent) believed that direct deduction from salary would be the most effective means of encouraging compliance with child maintenance obligations.

8.8 Summary

This chapter has explored separated parents' attitudes and likely responses to the most important proposed changes to the mechanics of the child maintenance system. The main findings include the following:

Joint birth registration

- In eight in ten cases or more, the names of both parents had been registered at the child's birth (89 per cent CSA NRPs, 84 per cent CSA PWCs and 79 per cent non-CSA PWCs).
- The status of the parents' previous relationship was strongly associated with the incidence of joint birth registration, which was the norm where now-separated parents had previously lived together.
- Paternity doubts had been an issue for one in ten CSA NRPs, along with eight per cent of CSA PWCs and four per cent of non-CSA PWCs.
- A clear majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the principle of joint birth registration (63 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 71 per cent of CSA PWCs and 84 per cent of CSA NRPs).
- Both non-CSA and CSA PWCs who had previously been married were more likely to agree with the view that the father's name should appear on the child's birth certificate than those PWCs who had not been married.
- The three most common reasons for supporting joint registration were because the child will then know the father's name, because fathers are as important as mothers and because it will encourage fathers to take more responsibility for their children.
- The three most common reasons given by PWCs for opposing joint registration were the fear of the risk of violence, not knowing who the father was and not wanting to name the father.

The role of a Government agency in calculating and collecting maintenance

- About two-thirds or more of the CSA's existing clientele said that they are likely or very likely to use the new organisation (84 per cent of CSA PWCs and 65 per cent of CSA NRPs).
- Overall about one in six CSA PWCs (16 per cent) thought that they would be either unlikely or very unlikely to use C-MEC for assessment purposes.

- The more difficult the parties' current relationships with their ex-partners, the more likely it is that they will turn to C-MEC for help with working out the amount of maintenance to be paid.
- Charging a flat rate fee for the initial calculation would have an impact on parents' interest in using the agency; the proportion of parents stating they were very likely or likely to use the agency reduced as the cost of making a calculation increased.
- Those CSA PWCs who are not currently receiving child maintenance payments are more likely than those who are in receipt of maintenance to be very likely to use the new body.

Changes for benefit claimants

- Most parents supported either the full or partial disregard policy, with only a small minority supporting the full recovery policy.
- A full maintenance disregard in the benefits system is likely to operate as a disincentive to labour market participation for, at most, about one in ten of all CSA PWCs.

The basis of the income assessment and links with HMRC

- All groups preferred the option of using net income; indeed, six in ten CSA NRPs (61 per cent) selected this method.
- PWCs tended to agree strongly with the direct transfer of income data from HMRC to C-MEC; CSA PWCs (66 per cent) were more likely to adopt this view than non-CSA PWCs (40 per cent).
- CSA NRPs were much more ambivalent about the idea of HMRC passing income data direct to C-MEC; only one in five (19 per cent) strongly agreed, although a further third (33 per cent) agreed with the proposition.

Enforcement sanctions

- A clear majority of all parents believed that direct deduction from salary would be the most effective method of dealing with non-compliance (76 per cent of non-CSA PWCs, 65 per cent of CSA PWCs and 70 per cent of NRPs).

9 Conclusion

This final chapter brings together some of the key findings from the report and considers their broader implications for the future shape of the child maintenance system. The shape of that system will be very different in the post-Henshaw world, once the reforms embodied in the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Bill 2008 have been brought fully into force. To put these changes in their proper context, it is important to appreciate how the child maintenance system has evolved over the past two decades. Taking this longer view, three distinct phases in the development of child maintenance arrangements may be identified: the pre-Child Support Agency (CSA) period (up until April 1993), the CSA period (1993 onwards, until the Government's new agency Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (C-MEC) is fully up and running) and, for the future, the C-MEC period.

9.1 The policy background

In the first period, until the Child Support Act 1991 came into force in April 1993, child maintenance issues had been accorded a relatively low priority in resolving financial matters following relationship breakdown. Upon divorce the courts were (and indeed still are) directed to give 'first consideration' to the welfare of the children but this was often seen in terms of ensuring a secure home for the children along with the primary carer. The courts typically set child maintenance orders at modest levels, applying discretionary criteria, with inconsistent and unpredictable outcomes for families in similar situations. Many other cases were resolved by private agreement, with equally diverse outcomes. Other cases, where the primary carer was in receipt of Income Support (IS), were sometimes resolved through a process of negotiation following the intervention of the former Department for Social Security's (DSS) liable relative sections, although their involvement tailed off in the 1980s as the Department, facing competing pressures in the benefits system, diverted key staff to other areas of its operations. Whatever the route used to arrive at child maintenance orders in the pre-1993 period, they were rarely adjusted in the light of inflation and enforcement was notoriously problematic, making compliance effectively a matter of personal choice for the payer. In many cases, no arrangement at all for child maintenance was put in place following the parents' separation.

At the outset of the second phase, when the CSA began operations in 1993, it was widely assumed that over time the previously disparate arrangements would be replaced by assessments made by the new Government agency. The plan was for the CSA to take on responsibility for all new cases following relationship breakdown, with the role of the courts being confined to confirming child maintenance consent orders, where the parties were not on benefit and could agree on an amount, along with a handful of cases involving exceptional circumstances (e.g. maintenance for children with serious disabilities). It was also envisaged that over time the CSA would assume responsibility for most pre-1993 cases involving child maintenance. The reality, of course, is that both the original old scheme, as established by the 1991 Act, and the post-2003 new scheme (following the 2000 Act) have been faced by operational and other problems. As a result, rather than the CSA taking over the role of the courts, private agreements – at least in non-benefit cases – have already assumed greater importance as a means of resolving child maintenance issues. Today, therefore, the CSA only deals with a minority of all potential child maintenance cases, in contrast to its Australian counterpart (more than 90 per cent of eligible children are covered by the Australian CSA, although many of those are, in practice, handled via private arrangements). In this country, the CSA's clientele falls broadly into two groups: The first are those that fall within the remit of the CSA because the PWC is claiming IS and so is (at present) obliged to apply for child maintenance. The second are those non-benefit or 'private cases' where either the parents cannot agree on an appropriate level of child maintenance or one or other parent (or both) prefers to have the CSA acting as an intermediary.

We are now moving into the third period, the post-Henshaw world of child maintenance. Whereas the 2003 changes represented an attempt to simplify and streamline the original machinery of the 1991 Act, the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Bill 2008 marks a radical departure from the existing arrangements in a number of important respects. The most important change is the new emphasis on encouraging separated parents to try and reach their own private agreements over child maintenance. The new Act will specifically direct C-MEC, the new agency that will replace the CSA, to *'encourage and support the making and keeping by parents of appropriate voluntary maintenance arrangements for their children'*. In keeping with this approach, and as noted above, parents with care (PWCs) who receive IS will no longer be required to apply to the CSA for child maintenance. Those PWCs will have the same choices that are available to those in non-benefit cases.

C-MEC's role will be wider than that of the CSA. The new organisation will have an express statutory responsibility to provide information and guidance services for separated parents. Such services will clearly be designed to encourage separated parents to make private arrangements for child maintenance where that is appropriate. Where such matters cannot be resolved by private agreement, C-MEC's procedures for making maintenance calculations will be fundamentally different to those of the CSA. C-MEC's assessments will be for fixed periods of a

year at a time, based on the non-resident parent's (NRP's) gross taxable income in the last available year, rather than on current net weekly income. Where necessary, C-MEC will be able to obtain income data direct from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC). C-MEC will also have more extensive powers in relation to the collection and enforcement of outstanding child maintenance debts.

9.2 The population of separated parents

The CSA's new scheme, which was introduced in March 2003, was preceded by the Baseline Survey, a major study of the child support population which was designed to provide a benchmark for evaluating the success of those reforms (Wikeley *et al.*, 2001). In the event, following the Henshaw Report (DWP 2006a) and widespread public consultation, the Government has opted for a fundamental redesign of the arrangements for child maintenance. The present survey has important lessons for the implementation process that is due to get under way once the 2008 Bill is passed into law. This survey is also wider than the Baseline Survey in that it explores the behaviours and attitudes of separated parents towards child maintenance and related issues among both the CSA's customer base and the non-CSA population.

This survey obtained large random samples of three main groups, namely non-CSA PWCs, CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs. For the reasons explained in Section 1.3.3, there was less success in obtaining a good response rate from non-CSA NRPs. For that reason findings in relation to this group have been reported separately at the end of each chapter. However, in general terms, the responses of non-CSA NRPs were broadly as were expected. In this concluding chapter the focus is therefore on the survey findings from the three main groups in our sample (non-CSA PWCs, CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs).

It should be emphasised that this study has demonstrated the very real problems in surveying the NRP population (see further Wilson, 2006). In this research the response rate (for those potential respondents who were in scope) for CSA NRPs was 69 per cent, as compared with 84 per cent for CSA PWCs. Despite significant efforts, it proved very difficult to obtain robust information on non-CSA NRPs – over 14,000 names were issued for telephoning screening, generating an in-scope sample of just 220 individuals. The findings of this study suggest that both the NRP samples include proportionately more NRPs who are on good terms with their ex-partner, involved with their children's lives and compliant with their child maintenance obligations. Research using other less robust methods (eg quota sampling or free find) is likely to produce particularly unrepresentative results.

In the early chapters of this report the demographic profile of separated parents (Chapter 2) was explored, together with their contact arrangements (Chapter 3) and financial arrangements (Chapter 4). Taken as a whole, the findings in these chapters highlight some important differences between the different groups and sub-groups involved, notably between CSA PWCs in non-benefits cases and CSA PWCs on benefits.

9.2.1 Non-CSA PWCs

Non-CSA PWCs had more friendly relationships with their ex-partners than either group of CSA separated parents, both at the point of separation and at the time of our interviews. It followed that they were more likely to have frequent (weekly) contact with their ex-partner. Non-CSA PWCs were also more likely to be working full-time than CSA PWCs. Previous research would suggest that these are all good indicators of the likelihood of child maintenance being paid and being paid at higher rates. Certainly, where maintenance was in payment, the mean amount was about twice as much as for CSA PWCs and the regularity of payment was better for non-CSA PWCs than their CSA counterparts. Furthermore, fewer than one in five non-CSA PWCs received £30 or less a week in child maintenance, compared to half of CSA PWCs. Non-CSA PWCs were also much more ready to contemplate some form of compromise over arrears of child support than CSA PWCs.

However, around six out of ten non-CSA PWCs had no maintenance arrangement at all in place, including virtually all those cases where the PWC had been in a casual or short-term relationship. The three most common reasons for the absence of maintenance arrangements were because it was not practicable (e.g. NRP's whereabouts were unknown), not wanted by the PWC or not seen as equitable (e.g. because the NRP contributed in other ways). In only about one in six of these cases with no arrangement was maintenance wanted but refused.

9.2.2 CSA PWCs

As noted above, CSA PWCs fall broadly into two categories – those who are not claiming IS (non-benefit cases) and those who are on benefit. The latter group, who at present have no choice but to apply for child support, change the characteristics of the CSA PWCs group as a whole and effectively mask the similarities between the former group (CSA PWCs who are not on benefit) and the non-CSA PWCs in socio-economic and demographic terms.

Thus, CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases share the same characteristics as non-CSA PWCs in many respects. For example, they are more likely to have been married, to have been in a longer relationship, to have re-partnered, to be working (either part-time or full-time) and to have higher household incomes than CSA PWCs in benefit cases. However, in one important respect there was a marked difference between CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases and non-CSA PWCs: CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases had the most acrimonious relationships with their ex-partners – more so than either CSA PWCs in benefit cases or their non-CSA counterparts. They are also more likely to hold strong views about the importance of the child maintenance obligation.

CSA PWCs in benefit cases typically had shorter relationships with their former partners than either CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases or their non-CSA counterparts. They were also more likely to have been cohabiting as an unmarried couple in their previous relationship than other PWCs. They were more likely to place the blame for

the breakdown of their relationship on their ex-partners (e.g. because of violence or addiction problems). Very few CSA PWCs in benefit cases had re-partnered (only three per cent). Of all those interviewed in the research, CSA PWCs were the least well off, and particularly those in benefit cases, whichever measure of poverty was used (household poverty, child poverty and debt poverty). CSA PWCs on benefits were also much more likely to be living in rented accommodation than either non-CSA PWCs or CSA PWCs in non-benefit cases. They were also more likely to have a long-standing illness or disability.

9.2.3 CSA NRPs

CSA NRPs were more likely to say that they had 'grown apart' than to blame their ex-partners for the breakdown of their relationship. They were also much more likely to have re-partnered (39 per cent) than their PWC counterparts (three per cent). As expected, they were also more likely to be working full-time. Around seven in ten CSA NRPs had some form of contact with their children, although they reported having more frequent contact (including overnight stays) than PWCs reported their ex-partners as having. CSA NRPs were also more likely to be unhappy with the levels of contact with children which were in place. However, they were more likely than CSA PWCs to regard the amount of child support in payment as fair. Three-quarters of CSA NRPs reported providing informal support (although fewer than half of CSA PWCs acknowledged receipt of such informal forms of support).

9.2.4 A typology of separated families

Clearly, it is important to understand the demographic and other characteristics of non-CSA PWCs, CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs respectively. However, these data only provide a partial and rather static picture of separated families. Chapter 5 developed a typology of separated families, taking into account a number of key variables such as their previous marital status, the friendliness of the parties' current relationships, the nature of, and satisfaction with, current contact arrangements and the extent to which contact or maintenance issues represented sources of tension. Using Latent Class Analysis (LCA), a statistical approach used to categorise individuals into different classes or types according to their responses to a series of questions, a model with five different types of separated families was identified as having the best fit with the data.

The five types that emerged from this analysis were separated families who: (1) were happy with contact; (2) had no contact at all; (3) were unhappy with contact; (4) had no face-to-face contact; or (5) had contact with children but not between the ex-partners. The 'labels' for each of the five different types focus on the contact variables, as these appeared to be the primary drivers. More parents fell into the first 'happy contact' type, arguably the 'best' arrangement of the five options, than fell into any other type. Although it was the largest type for all parent groups, a greater proportion (52 per cent) of CSA NRPs who were part of a benefit case fell into this type than any other parent groups. Conversely, and in keeping with the earlier findings discussed already, CSA parents who were not

part of benefit cases were least likely to fall into this group. CSA PWCs who were on benefits were more likely than other groups to be in the second 'unhappy contact' group and were twice as likely to be in this group than their CSA PWC non-benefit counterparts.

9.3 Separated parents and attitudes towards child maintenance

Very few separated parents thought that NRPs did not have any obligation to pay child maintenance. However, as anticipated, PWCs had stronger views about this principle than NRPs. CSA PWCs were the most likely to believe in the importance of the principle of paying child maintenance. Very small numbers of parents across all groups thought that NRPs who had not wanted the child should have no responsibility at all.

The majority of parents seemed to place store in the connection between maintenance payments and contact arrangements, thinking that NRPs paying full maintenance had rights of contact. However, twice as many CSA NRPs (61 per cent) agreed strongly with this statement than PWCs (32 per cent). CSA NRPs were also more likely to agree with the view that NRPs who are not allowed contact with their child should not be obliged to pay maintenance. Around half of PWCs thought that frequent overnight stays with the NRP should mean that less was paid in maintenance. However, the proportion of CSA NRPs who thought that the overnight stays should be taken into consideration was substantially higher.

Support for the idea that an NRP with a new child should pay less for their other children was low among PWCs, with the great majority disagreeing. However, CSA NRPs were more than three times as likely to think that having a child in a new relationship should reduce their financial obligation to their other children. PWCs were more likely than the CSA NRPs to think that the NRP's financial obligations would not alter if the PWC entered a new relationship, with CSA PWCs most likely to express this view.

Whilst the vast majority (three-quarters or more) of all separated parents agreed that the NRP's income should affect the level of maintenance, the views of NRPs and PWCs differed more about the extent to which both parents' incomes should be taken into account. NRPs were more likely than PWCs to think that informal support should affect the amount of formal maintenance that should be paid. NRPs were also much more likely than PWCs to agree with the idea of paying directly for things for their children rather than paying regular child maintenance.

9.4 Discussions over child maintenance and information and support needs

Discussions over money inevitably take place against a background of the power relationships and the bargaining positions of the respective parents. As expected, therefore, CSA NRPs were about twice as likely as CSA PWCs to describe having financial discussions with their ex-partners, including those about child maintenance payments, as either fairly easy or very easy. Overall, however, only a minority of parents (fewer than three in ten) discussed financial issues with their ex-partners. Moreover, at least four out of ten parents (including CSA NRPs) who did not currently discuss financial matters with their ex-partners, thought that it would be very difficult (and not just difficult) to do so.

The information and support needs of separated parents were explored in Chapter 6. At present, parents make relatively little use of outside sources of information and support on child maintenance issues. The most commonly used agencies were Jobcentre Plus or New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) Advisers (49 per cent of CSA PWCs and 29 per cent of non-CSA PWCs) and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) (48 per cent of CSA NRPs). Only a minority of parents had used the CSA website (18 per cent of both CSA groups and six per cent of non-CSA PWCs). The great majority – eight in ten of all parents – had not consulted a solicitor in the past about child maintenance. The most common topics that parents had obtained information about were (for all three groups) working out how much maintenance to pay or receive and how to collect payments (for PWCs) whether or not to make a formal arrangement and (for NRPs) whether to pay more or less maintenance.

Despite the limited current use of outside assistance, most parents would consider using a professional organisation in the future if they needed information and support in relation to child maintenance. CSA clients were most likely to consider this (77 per cent of CSA NRPs and 82 per cent of CSA PWCs said they might, compared to 65 per cent of non-CSA PWCs). In keeping with current usage, the organisations that parents most often said they would turn to in the future were CAB (for non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs) and the CSA or another Government agency (for CSA PWCs). Notwithstanding the current low rates of usage, around a third of parents said they would consider consulting a lawyer in future.

A significant minority of parents were not sure what areas they might need help and support on in the future but for others a key area of interest across all groups was working out how much maintenance to pay or receive (34 per cent non-CSA PWCs, 40 per cent CSA NRPs, 41 per cent CSA PWCs).

The methods of receiving information and support which were most commonly used at present and which were most preferred for the future, were through face-to-face meetings and over the phone. This represents a considerable challenge for the delivery of the new reforms, both in terms of resources and the quality of service (a large proportion of CSA parents were dissatisfied with the service they

had received, and some of their complaints were about being given incorrect or inconsistent information).

9.5 The scope for private arrangements over child maintenance

It is clear that many parents already have successful private arrangements in place for child maintenance. There is also a considerable degree of support for the view that parents should make maintenance arrangements between themselves: around half of both non-CSA PWCs and CSA NRPs took this view. However, just over half of CSA PWCs thought that parents should make maintenance arrangements with the help of a Government agency.

The key factors that parents thought would facilitate the making of private arrangements were partly related to access to help, for example someone to help parents work out how much maintenance to pay and receive or to help them negotiate. But key factors that would help making private agreements were also linked to the friendliness of the relationship between the parents and their financial situation. The main advantages to making private arrangements that parents thought of were that they were quicker and easier, that they helped to reduce conflict and that they respected the parties' privacy. The main disadvantages that parents perceived were that the NRP might not be willing or able to pay, that such arrangements may cause conflict and that there needs to be a good relationship between the parents in the first place.

Overall, CSA PWCs were markedly more negative about private arrangements than other parents – 24 per cent of them said that they brought no advantages, compared to six per cent of non-CSA PWCs and nine per cent of CSA NRPs. These attitudes were also reflected in the respective confidence of the different groups of separated parents that they would be able to use new information and guidance services to make a private arrangement, with CSA PWCs expressing the least confidence. There was considerable support among all three groups for information and guidance services to be provided on a face-to-face basis and through a local service (an important feature of the new network of Family Relationship Centres in Australia, although these also have an on-line and telephone presence).⁴³

The findings of this study confirm the warning by Bell *et al.* (2007: 156) that '*the Government needs to take care not to underestimate the market for any future State system of child support*'. In the present study, two-thirds or more of the CSA's existing clientele said that they are likely or very likely to use C-MEC. Overall, only about one in six CSA PWCs thought that they were either unlikely or very unlikely to use C-MEC for assessment purposes. As expected, the more difficult the parties' current relationship with their ex-partners, the more likely it is that they will turn to C-MEC for help with working out the amount of maintenance to be paid.

⁴³ <http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/>. See Parkinson (2006).

Those CSA PWCs who are not currently receiving child maintenance payments are more likely than those who are in receipt of maintenance to be very likely to use the new body. However, charging a flat rate fee for the initial calculation would have an impact on parents' interest in using C-MEC; the proportion of parents stating they were very likely or likely to use the new agency reduced as the cost of making a calculation increased.

Appendix

Technical details

1 Questionnaire development and the interview

1.1 Summary

The questionnaire was developed by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), Professor Nick Wikeley and Dr. Christine Skinner, through liaison with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The interview lasted, on average, 50 minutes. It began by collecting information on the people living in the household and also any non-resident children. The next section focused on the relationship that the respondent had with their ex-partner and the reasons and nature of the separation. A series of questions were then asked about the contact arrangements between the children and the non-resident parent (NRP) – looping round for each child in turn. In this section questions were also asked about the current contact between the respondent and their ex-partner. Parents who had used the Child Support Agency (CSA) in the past were then asked a set of questions about their experiences of the CSA. The following section asked all parents about the information and guidance services they had used in the past, in relation to child maintenance and about their possible information needs for the future. Payments between the two parents were then asked about, including child maintenance payments and other money that passed between them. The penultimate section asked parents a series of attitudinal questions, gathering their views on the principle of child maintenance and several changes the Government had proposed making to the way they support separating parents.

The final section gathered demographic information including about the respondent's living standards, housing tenure, educational qualifications and disability and long-term illness. Many questions were asked of all parents, but throughout the questionnaire they were routed to different questions according to whether they were a client of the CSA or not and whether they were a parent with care (PWC) or an NRP.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face, using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), programmed using Blaise. Aids to interviewing consisted of a set of showcards and a ten year calendar to aid recall of relationship history.

1.2 Piloting the questionnaire

Sections of the draft questionnaire were cognitively tested with 18 parents (seven non-CSA PWCs, four non-CSA NRPs, two CSA NRPs and five CSA PWCs), in a face-to-face paper-based interview. The interviews involved a particular focus on the information and support services parents had used in the past and their attitudes towards child maintenance and some of the policy changes that the Government were thinking of introducing. Respondents who participated in the cognitive interviews had taken part in two previous NatCen surveys (the Maintenance Direct Quantitative Survey and the Family Resources Survey 2004, 2005 and 2006) and had said that they were happy for NatCen to contact them again. The recommendations from the cognitive pilot led to changes in the language used in some questions and the reduction of the introductions to some questions.

During the pilot stage, 57 parents were interviewed using the revised questionnaire and a full CAPI program. These included eight non-CSA NRPs, ten non-CSA PWCs, 19 CSA NRPs and 20 CSA PWCs. Twelve interviewers carried out the pilot across 11 areas ensuring a good mixture of urban and rural regions. The feedback was positive, with most parents happy to take part, although the questionnaire was revised in line with the interviewers' comments, which allowed improvements to the interview computer program and the accompanying documents.

At the cognitive pilot and pilot stages, interviewers were briefed and de-briefed in person by the research team, and interviewers completed an evaluation form, where they were asked to summarise their experiences or raise any particular problems encountered during fieldwork. These forms were used as the basis for discussion at the de-briefings.

1.3 Questionnaire content

Module A Household composition and non-resident children

- Current household composition
- Non-resident children (including any over 18)
- Selection of 'relevant' children and ex-partner
- Whether or not respondent receives or pays maintenance
- Employment, benefits and income

Module B Separation and background arrangements

- Relationship status with ex-partner
- Reasons for separation and dates

- Module C Contact arrangements and relationships overview
- Frequency and type(s) of contact between NRP and each 'relevant' child (where there is contact)
 - Dates of last contact and reasons for lack of contact (where no contact) for each 'relevant' child
 - Ease of changing contact arrangements and satisfaction with arrangements
 - Current relationship quality between respondent and ex-partner
- Module D Experiences and views of using the CSA (asked of CSA clients only)
- Reason for using the CSA
 - Views of service provided by CSA
- Module E Help and guidance in making child maintenance arrangements
- Information and guidance sources used in the past, reasons for use and views on helpfulness
 - Reasons for not using the CSA (asked of non-CSA respondents only)
 - Information and guidance sources parents may use in the future and reasons for use
 - Confidence in using Government information services in the future
 - Information services parents feel the Government should focus on
- Module F Current or most recent payment arrangements
- Reasons for not having made a maintenance arrangement
 - Nature of private arrangements and court orders
 - Frequency, regularity and amount of maintenance paid or received
 - Reasons for non-payment and late payment
 - Informal support paid to ex-partner, respondent or child
 - Impact of paying or receiving (or not) maintenance on financial situation
 - Discussion of financial matters between parents and with children

- Module G Attitudes towards child maintenance
- Attitudes towards the principle of child maintenance
 - Attitudes towards private arrangements
 - Attitudes towards various potential changes in child maintenance policy (i.e. using C-MEC, changes to disregard, enforcement measures)
- Module H Demographics
- Living standards of respondent and household
 - Educational qualifications, housing tenure, ethnicity, disability and long-term illness

1.4 Selecting 'relevant' ex-partners and children

Family circumstances can be quite complicated and parents may have more than one child with more than one ex-partner, and indeed, more than one maintenance arrangement. It was, therefore, necessary to select 'relevant' children and ex-partners for the interview at the start, to ensure that respondents were clear who was being referred to.

Children were deemed as 'relevant' to the interview if they were:

- aged 15 or under or 16 to 19 and in full-time education (based on the CSA age criteria);
- the child of the respondent and the named ex-partner (for the CSA clients) or the selected ex-partner (for the non-CSA parents);
- living more than half the time with the PWC.

For the CSA clients the name of the relevant ex-partner (with whom they had the CSA arrangement) was fed into the interview computer program, so interviewers were able to refer to the ex-partner by name during the interview. Respondents were asked at the beginning of the interview if they did indeed have an arrangement through the CSA with the named ex-partner and asked to specify what name to use throughout the rest of the interview.

For the non-CSA parents, the names of the other parents of their children (both those who lived with them and those who did not) were collected. Where the children fitted the age and the residential criteria (see above) they were marked as 'relevant' and then the computer program compiled a list of the names of the other parents of these children, from which it randomly selected one to talk about in the rest of the interview.

All respondents were told which children and ex-partner the questions would ask about in the rest of the interview and the names of these children and ex-partners were used throughout the interview to ensure respondents were clear who was being referred to.

2 Contacting respondents

2.1 Information interviewers had before the interviews

Non-CSA NRPs

For the non-CSA NRPs interviewers had the follow information which was obtained or checked in the telephone screen:

- name;
- home address;
- telephone number;
- that they had non-resident children of the 'relevant' age;
- that they had not been in contact with the CSA in the past.

On the doorstep, interviewers checked that the information given in the telephone screen was correct.

Non-CSA PWC

For the non-CSA PWCs where they had been screened over the phone, respondents had the following information:

- name;
- home address;
- telephone number;
- that they had resident children of the 'relevant' age;
- that they had not been in contact with the CSA in the past.

On the doorstep, interviewers checked that the information given in the telephone screen was correct.

Where non-CSA PWCs were not screened first by telephone, because telephone numbers were not available, the information that interviewers had was:

- name;
- home address;
- that they were a parent.

Interviewers then had to carry out screening on the doorstep to establish if they:

- were a separated parent;
- had a resident child of the 'relevant' age;
- had not been in contact with the CSA in the past.

CSA clients

All interviews were conducted by NatCen interviewers. For the CSA clients, as the sample was drawn from CSA records, interviewers had the following details for all respondents:

- name;
- home address;
- name of ex-partner;
- whether or not a telephone number was available for the respondent;
- whether the respondent was an NRP or PWC.

On the doorstep, interviewers checked that the parent was an NRP or PWC, that their children were of eligible age and that they had been in contact with the CSA relating to maintenance for the 'relevant' children.

2.2 Information sent to respondents before the interview

Non-CSA NRPs

As discussed in Section 1.3.1, these respondents were drawn from the Family Resources Survey (FRS). Some of the FRS is carried out by NatCen interviewers and some by Office for National Statistics (ONS) interviewers. Those respondents to the FRS who were interviewed by ONS interviewers were sent an opt-out letter before the telephone screen which gave them some information about NatCen, why they had been selected and where we had got their details from. The purpose of the letter was to give respondents an opportunity to opt-out of a telephone interviewer contacting them to ask them to take part in the telephone interview (by calling a freephone number). Those respondents to FRS who had been interviewed by a NatCen interviewer were sent a similar letter to those interviewed by the ONS but without the option to opt-out before a telephone interviewer called them. This different approach for the two groups was taken because respondents to FRS who had been interviewed by a NatCen interviewer had already given their permission to be contacted by NatCen again, whereas those who had been interviewed by an ONS interviewer had given their permission to be contact by the ONS again (rather than NatCen). Those who opted-out of the telephone screen were not contacted again.

Parents who were screened-in through the telephone screen and agreed that a face-to-face interviewer could contact them were then sent an advance letter which gave them more information about the survey, the name of the interviewer who would be contacting them and a free phone number they could call if they had any further questions.

Non-CSA PWCs and CSA clients

Prior to an interviewer contacting them to carry out the doorstep or face-to-face screen, these parents were sent an opt-out letter with some information about the survey, where we had obtained their details from and a freephone number they could call if they did not want to be contacted by an interviewer. Those who opted-out were not contacted again.

Parents who did not opt-out were sent an advance letter which gave them more information about the survey, the name of the interviewer who would be contacting them and a freephone number they could call if they had any further questions.

Interviewers then called at the respondents' homes. Where possible, interviews were conducted in private and all respondents read the advance letter and frequently asked questions before the interview commenced.

Confidentiality was crucial at all stages of the study. On the doorstep interviewers did not reveal any confidential information about respondents (for example, that they knew they were a parent or that they had been in contact with the CSA in the past) or show any materials such as the opt-out letter or advance letter until they were sure they were talking to the named respondent. They were also told not to mention any information about the nature of the survey to anyone other than the named respondent. Only the named respondent was asked the screening questions and then interviewed.

During fieldwork, interviewers used standard tracing procedures. When they were able to establish their new address, they were instructed to follow up at the new address if it was local to them. Where respondents had moved out of the area, the case was allocated to another interviewer where possible.

3 Briefing

All interviewers attended a full-day briefing on the project before starting fieldwork, led by the NatCen research team. Interviewers also had comprehensive project instructions covering all aspects of the briefing.

Briefing sessions provided an introduction to the study and its aims, an explanation of the sample and contact procedures, full definitions of the different sample groups and four dummy interview scenarios designed to familiarise interviewers with the questions and flow of the interview.

4 Fieldwork and response rates

4.1 Response rates

The telephone screening for the non-CSA NRPs took place in March, April and May 2007. Face-to-face fieldwork for all groups of parents and the telephone screening

for the non-CSA PWCs began in early June 2007 and ran until mid-September 2007. Updates were sent to the DWP at approximately fortnightly intervals. Tables A.1 to A.4 provided detailed response rates for each sample group.

Table A.1 Non-CSA NRP response rate

	N	Selected %	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
Selected for telephone screen	14,826				
<i>Opt-outs</i>	192	1			
Issued (telephone screen)	14,094	95			
Screened-in	361	2			
Issued (face-to-face interviews)	351 ¹	2			
<i>Office refusals</i>	5			1	
<i>Out of scope</i>	23			7	
<i>Unproductives</i>	37			11	
<i>Ineligible²</i>	66			19	
In scope	220			63	
<i>Refusals</i>	31			9	14
<i>Fully productive</i>	189			54	86
<i>Partially productive</i>	0			0	0
Total productive	189			54	86

¹ A total of 361 respondents were screened in through the telephone screen but some of these respondents were approached for pilot fieldwork – and hence, not issued to interviewers for the main stage fieldwork.

² The number of ineligible cases was much higher than anticipated, given that these respondents had previously taken part in a telephone screen. Some investigations were undertaken (for example, checking the notes on the telephone screening, asking interviewers for more information about why respondents were ineligible) but no explanation for why these cases were screened in over the phone but then found to be ineligible on the doorstep was found (some respondents' circumstances had changed since the telephone screen but only very few). Further investigation (i.e. follow up telephone interviews with these cases) was considered but decided against as it was unlikely to yield any further interviews. The ineligible category also includes five cases that were found to be ineligible after data cleaning.

Table A.2 Non-CSA PWCs

	N	Selected %	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
Selected	7,569				
<i>Opt-outs</i>	626	8			
Issued (face-to-face and telephone screen)	6,943	92			
<i>Office refusals</i>	390			6	
<i>Out of scope</i>	546			8	
<i>Unproductives</i>	241			3	
<i>Refusal –telephone</i>	169			2	
Screened-out¹	4,644			67	
Screened-in	953			14	
<i>Refusal – face-to-face</i>	297			4	31
<i>Fully productive</i>	650			9	68
<i>Partially productive</i>	6			0	1
Total productive	656			9	69

¹ The screened-out category includes 13 cases that were found to be ineligible after data cleaning.

Table A.3 CSA NRP response rate

	N	Selected %	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
Selected	1,681				
<i>Opt-outs</i>	56	3			
Issued (face-to-face interviews)	1,625	97			
<i>Office refusals</i>	63			4	
<i>Out of scope</i>	496			31	
<i>Unproductives</i>	189			12	
<i>Ineligible¹</i>	184			11	
In scope	693			43	
<i>Refusals</i>	214			13	31
<i>Fully productive</i>	478			29	69
<i>Partially productive</i>	1			0	0
Total productive	479			29	69

¹ The ineligible category includes eight cases that were found to be ineligible after data cleaning.

Table A.4 CSA PWCs response rate

	N	Selected %	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
Selected	1,109				
<i>Opt-outs</i>	28	3			
Issued (face-to-face interviews)	1,082	97			
<i>Office refusals</i>	48			4	
<i>Out of scope</i>	90			8	
<i>Unproductives</i>	82			8	
<i>Ineligible¹</i>	111			10	
In scope	751			69	
<i>Refusals</i>	119			11	16
<i>Fully productive</i>	628			58	84
<i>Partially productive</i>	4			0	1
Total productive	632			58	84

¹ The ineligible category includes 15 cases that were found to be ineligible after data cleaning.

4.2 Screening-in rate for the non-CSA NRPs

The sample size for the non-CSA NRP group was much smaller than for the other groups due to a number of ineligible cases (as discussed in the footnote to Table A.1) and a lower than expected screening-in rate from the telephone screen (see Table A.5). The proportion of NRPs not involved with the CSA was slightly lower than predicted (55 per cent rather than 58 per cent) and the overall sample available from the FRS was lower than the estimates based on the NatCen sample (i.e. there were fewer men in the relevant age group in the ONS sample than in the NatCen sample for the same fieldwork dates).

Participation in the telephone screening was very good however, at 68 per cent. Telephone numbers were tried up to approximately 20 times in order to make contact with respondents. The refusal rate was very low, and the main reason for an unproductive outcome was non-contact due to an incorrect telephone number (and manual telephone look-ups were unsuccessful). Where phone numbers were found to be incorrect, a mailout was conducted asking respondents to contact us with a new phone number but the response to this exercise was low, as expected.

Table A.5 Non-CSA NRPs telephone screen response rate

	Estimated soon after start of fieldwork %	Final %
Selected	15,520 ¹	14,826
Opt-out rate	5%	1% ²
Telephone screening participation	65%	68%
Screening: NRP	8%	8%
Screening: Not on CSA	58%	55%
Happy to be recontacted	– ³	87%
Issued	-	361

¹ This was an estimate based on the NatCen sample provided – the eligible ONS sample size was confirmed later.

² Opt-outs were for ONS sample only.

³ The estimated survey participation rate of 65 per cent included whether respondents were happy to be recontacted.

4.3 Fieldwork procedures

The survey adhered to NatCen's standard field quality control measures. As part of the routine procedures, every interviewer is accompanied in the field by a supervisor for a full day's work twice a year. This system ensures that at least ten per cent of interviewers will have been supervised on this particular survey. In addition, one in ten interviews are routinely back-checked by NatCen's Quality Control Unit. Back-checking is carried out by telephone where possible, or by post. Back-checks thank the respondent for taking part, ask whether the right person was interviewed, whether various procedures were carried out correctly and whether the interviewer left a good impression.

5 Coding and editing

The CAPI program ensures that the correct routing is followed throughout the questionnaire and applies range and consistency error checks. These checks allow interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the respondent. A separate 'in-house' editing process was also used, which covered some of the more complex data checking, combined with the coding process for open answers.

Following briefings by the NatCen research team, the data was coded by a team of coders under the management of the NatCen Operations team, using a second version of the CAPI program which included additional checks and codes for open answers. 'Other specify' questions are used when respondents volunteer an alternative response to the pre-coded choice offered to them. These questions were back-coded to the original list of pre-coded responses where possible (using a new set of variables rather than overwriting interviewer coding). Notes made

by interviewers during interviews were also examined and the data amended if appropriate, ensuring high quality data. Queries and difficulties that could not be resolved by the coder or the team were referred to researchers for resolution.

In the course of each interview, where a respondent gave details of current or recent spells of employment, this information was coded to be consistent with Standard Industrial and Occupational classifications – NS-SEC and SOC (2000).

Once the data set was clean, the analysis file of question-based and derived variables was set up in SPSS and all questions and answer codes labelled.

6 Derived variables

Because the final data was the product of a complex CAPI program, some variables which researchers needed for analysis had to be derived from several existing variables. For this task, a specialist data manager was involved in creating suitable variables, working from several specifications from researchers.

Most of the derived variables created fall into the following types:

1. Key demographic variables such as the working status of the family, or the age of the youngest relevant child.
2. Variables which join together two questions in the original data, because one had been answered by PWCs and the other by NRPs, or by CSA and non-CSA parents (where answer scales were comparable).
3. Combining responses from a number of variables to create a particular measure such as whether the respondent paid or received child maintenance and/or informal support.

Variables that combined the questions about contact were used to create a set of 'contact variables'. In the CAPI program we asked about the contact arrangements between the NRP and each relevant child. The questions looped around for each child, starting with the eldest. In order to save them from repeating the same data twice or more, respondents were also given the chance to say that the arrangements were the same for Child B as for Child A or the same for Child A and Child C but different for Child B, etc.

In order to analyse the contact data at the family level, we decided to create one set of derived variables by identifying and selecting one 'prevailing' set of contact arrangements per family. So, if Child A and Child C had one set of arrangements to see their NRP and Child B had a separate set of arrangements (different from the others), then the arrangements used by the majority of children (A and C) would be selected. If there was no clear prevailing set of arrangements (e.g. because Child A and Child B had different arrangements and there were no other relevant children) then a random selection of the arrangements was selected.

6.1 Poverty scales

Within the interview, parents were asked a set of questions from the FRS that are used to measure various aspects of poverty⁴⁴. The answers to these questions were scored and combined into three poverty scales: household poverty, child poverty and debt poverty. The scores were split into quintiles⁴⁵ where the first quintile comprises those who are most affluent and the fifth quintile comprises those subject to the most poverty. These scales were constructed as follows:

6.2 Household poverty

The household poverty scale incorporated responses to 11 questions by summing the responses that indicated the respondent had experienced poverty, and then dividing by the number of questions with a valid response. The relevant questions covered whether the household:

- had a holiday away from home for at least one week a year, whilst not staying with relatives at their home;
- had friends or family round for a drink or meal at least once a month;
- had at least two pairs of all weather shoes for adults;
- had enough money to keep their home in a decent state of decoration;
- had household contents insurance;
- made regular savings of £10 a month or more for rainy days or retirement;
- was able to replace worn out furniture;
- was able to replace or repair major electrical goods such as a refrigerator or a washing machine, when broken;
- had a small amount of money to spend each week on themselves or their family;
- had a hobby or leisure activity;
- was able to keep their accommodation warm enough.⁴⁶

Respondents that indicated that they would like to have these things but could not afford them were considered to experience poverty (in contrast to those who either had these things or did not want or need these things at the moment).

⁴⁴ Note that these measures are not among those used by Government for the measurement of poverty.

⁴⁵ However, since a high proportion of parents scored zero on child and debt poverty, in these tables the quintiles at the most affluent end of the distribution were combined.

⁴⁶ The response options for the final question in this set were slightly different. For this question the responses were 'yes' and 'no' and we considered 'no' to indicate that the household experienced poverty.

6.3 Child poverty

The child poverty scale incorporated responses to eight questions by summing the responses that indicated the respondent had experienced poverty, and then dividing by the number of questions with a valid response. The relevant questions covered firstly whether the respondent's children:

- have a family holiday away from home for at least one week a year;
- have leisure equipment such as sports equipment or a bicycle;
- have celebrations on special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas or other religious festivals;
- go swimming at least once a month;
- do a hobby or leisure activity;
- have friends round for tea or a snack at least once a fortnight.

Secondly, the relevant questions covered whether the respondent's house has:

- enough bedrooms for every child of ten years or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom;
- has an outdoor space or facilities nearby where their children can play safely.

As above, those respondents who indicated that their children would like to have these things but they could not afford them, were considered to experience poverty (in contrast to those who either had these things or did not want or need these things at the moment).

6.4 Debt poverty

The debt poverty scale was derived from a single multiple response question through summing the total number of bills and payments that the respondent was behind with and dividing by the number of bills and payments asked about. This included being behind with:

- the electricity bill;
- the gas bill;
- other fuel bills like coal or oil;
- council tax;
- insurance policies;
- the telephone bill;
- television/video rental or HP;
- other HP payments;
- water rates.

7 Latent Class analysis

The typology of separated families was constructed using Latent Class Analysis (LCA). This is a multivariate statistical approach used to categorise individuals into different groups or 'latent classes' according to their responses to a series of questions. Essentially, LCA consists of a) identifying the number of classes that best fit the data; and b) generating probabilities, per respondent, of class membership. Once the model has been estimated, an individual is assigned to the class for which they have the highest probability. The software Latent Gold version 4.0 was used to carry out this analysis (http://www.statisticalinnovations.com/products/latentgold_v4.html).

One crucial aspect of LCA is to identify the number of latent classes that best fits the data. In order to do so, we examined a range of models with different numbers of classes (from three to eight classes). In order to select the most appropriate model we looked at both formal and informal considerations.

Several statistical tests were used to assess the goodness of fit (see Table A.6). The recommended guidelines for good fitting models indicate that small values of BIC, AIC and AIC3 correspond to a good fit. According to these rules the number of clusters should be between three and eight (three if BIC used, seven if AIC used, eight if AIC3 used). Thus, the selection between these models was made using less formal considerations.

Table A.6 Latent class models and goodness of fit statistics

	Model with 3 clusters	Model with 4 clusters	Model with 5 clusters
L-squared (L^2)	18366.3	17553.0	16690.0
BIC (based on L^2)	6260.6	5566.5	4822.6
AIC (based on L^2)	15114.4	14333.2	13502.2
AIC3 (based on L^2)	13488.5	12723.2	11908.2
CAIC (based on L^2)	4634.6	3956.5	3228.6
Dissimilarity Index	0.9	0.9	0.9
Classification errors	0.01	0.06	0.05

Note: BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion), AIC (Akaike Information Criterion), AIC3 (Akaike Information Criterion 3).

Class size, probabilities of class membership and parsimony were then examined. The size of the clusters showed that models with five or more classes had some groups with very few cases. However, although the model with five clusters had one group with a small size (only 69 cases), we believed this was the best solution because respondents within each class were reasonably homogenous in terms of their responses.

The probabilities of class membership suggested that a five-cluster model was a good model. Ideally, each individual should have a probability of one of being

in one class and zero of being in other classes, thus showing that the model assigns individuals into their designated class with accuracy. An examination of the average membership probabilities indicated that for a model with five clusters, the probability of being assigned to the class for which they have the highest probability was of 0.90. The equivalent value for a model with six or more clusters was also of 0.90. This suggests that a model with five clusters fits the data just as well as a model with six or more clusters.

The principle of parsimony, which suggests that a model with fewer parameters that fits the data well should be preferred over one with more parameters, indicated that a model with five clusters was the best solution for our data.

Finally, we examined whether the classes within the five-cluster model had a meaningful interpretation by looking at the responses to the nine statements around families' relationships, their contact arrangements and their lines of communication concerning financial arrangements. We observed that each class was distinctive from the rest and had a meaningful interpretation. Thus, based on all the previous considerations we chose a model with five latent classes.

The different classes are described below.

Type 1: Happy with contact

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting).
- Friendly relationship with ex-partner.
- Frequent contact with children.
- Happy with their level of contact.
- Flexible contact arrangements.
- Contact arrangements not a source of tension.
- PWC usually the main carer, with some sharing.
- Maintenance not really a source of tension.
- Fairly easy to discuss financial matters.

Type 2: No contact at all

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely not to have been living together.
- No contact with ex-partner.
- No contact with children.
- Relatively happy with level of contact.

- No contact arrangements (flexibility, therefore, not applicable).
- No contact arrangements (tension, therefore, not applicable).
- PWC always main carer.
- No contact with ex-partner (tension, therefore, not applicable).
- Very difficult (or potentially very difficult) to discuss financial matters.

Type 3: Unhappy with contact

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (mainly married).
- Not very friendly relationship with ex-partner.
- Infrequent contact with children.
- Unhappy with level of contact.
- Less flexible contact arrangements.
- Contact arrangements a major source of tension.
- PWC almost always main carer – little sharing.
- Maintenance a major source of tension.
- Very difficult to discuss financial matters.

Type 4: No face-to-face contact

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting).
- Not very friendly relationship with ex-partner.
- No contact with children (or non-physical contact only, e.g. phone).
- Unhappy with level of contact.
- No contact arrangements (flexibility, therefore, not applicable).
- Contact arrangements a major source of tension.
- PWC always main carer.
- Maintenance a major source of tension.
- Quite difficult to discuss financial matters.

Type 5: Contact with children but not with ex-partner

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting).
- Not very friendly relationship with ex-partner.
- Relatively frequent contact with children.
- Relatively happy with level of contact.
- Relatively flexible contact arrangements (or don't know).
- No contact with ex-partner (tension, therefore, not applicable).
- PWC usually main carer – sometimes information unknown.
- No contact with ex-partner (tension, therefore, not applicable).
- Very difficult (or potentially very difficult) to discuss financial matters.

8 Logistic regression tables

8.1 Having a formal child maintenance arrangement only

Table A.7 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent had a formal child maintenance arrangement only, by types of families)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Type 2	0.3	0.2	-2.0*	20.9	9.3	6.8***	2.2	0.5	3.3***
Type 3	1.1	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.3	-1.1	0.8	0.2	-0.8
Type 4	0.8	0.5	-0.4	3.5	1.6	2.9***	1.9	0.5	2.3*
Type 5	2.3	1.8	1.0	3.0	1.8	1.8+	1.1	0.5	0.3

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.8 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent had a formal child maintenance arrangement only, by types of families and number of relevant children, age of youngest child, re-partnering, NRP working status, household poverty, distance between parents' homes, benefit status of PWC and mothers age)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Type 2	1.2	1.0	0.3	28.5	13.0	7.3***	2.7	0.8	3.5***
Type 3	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.3	-1.2	0.9	0.2	-0.4
Type 4	0.8	0.8	-0.2	3.0	1.6	2.0**	2.5	0.7	3.2***
Type 5	2.1	1.7	0.9	2.4	1.6	1.4	1.3	0.6	0.6
No relevant children									
1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2	1.8	0.8	1.3	1.1	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.2	-1.0
3+	0.5	0.5	-0.7	1.3	1.0	0.4	1.1	0.4	0.2
Age youngest child									
0-4	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
5-9	0.8	0.5	-0.4	0.4	0.2	-2.0*	1.0	0.2	0.0
10-15	0.7	0.4	-0.7	0.5	0.2	-1.8+	0.7	0.2	-1.5
16-19	2.3	1.5	1.2	0.5	0.4	-1.0	0.9	0.4	-0.2
Parent has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.6	0.2	-1.6	1.3	0.3	1.1
NRP has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	2.3	1.0	2.0*	1.5	0.5	1.2	1.3	0.3	1.3
NRP working status									
Working	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Not working	0.6	0.6	-0.6	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.8	0.3	-0.7
DK	3.2	1.6	2.3*	-	-	-	0.9	0.2	-0.5

Continued

Table A.8 Continued

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
HH poverty									
1st quintile	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2nd quintile	3.8	1.9	2.6	0.7	0.4	-0.7	0.6	0.2	-1.5
3rd quintile	3.0	1.9	1.7	0.9	0.5	-0.2	0.5	0.2	-1.9
4th quintile	1.2	0.9	0.2	2.2	1.2	1.5	0.6	0.2	-1.4
5th quintile	1.9	1.7	0.7	2.8	1.4	2.1	0.6	0.2	-1.4
Distance									
Less than 15 minutes	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
15 to 30 minutes	0.5	0.3	-1.2	1.1	0.5	0.3	0.9	0.2	-0.4
30 minutes to 1 hour	1.1	0.6	0.3	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.2	-1.6
1 to 2 hours	1.1	0.7	0.2	2.2	1.4	1.2	0.7	0.3	-0.9
More than 2 hours	0.6	0.4	-0.7	1.0	0.6	-0.1	0.5	0.2	-2.0
DK	-			1.4	1.0	0.5	0.7	0.2	-1.1
Benefits									
Yes	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
No	-	-	-	1.1	0.4	0.2	1.0	0.2	-0.1
Mother's age									
14-19	0.2	0.2	-1.8	-	-	-	0.8	0.3	-0.7
20-24	0.4	0.2	-1.8	-	-	-	1.2	0.3	0.5
25-29	1.0	0.5	-0.1	-	-	-	0.8	0.3	-0.6
30+	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.9 Predicted probabilities whether or not respondent had a formal child maintenance arrangement only (based against Type 1)

Type	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N
Type 1	0.069	276	0.071	178	0.295	186
Type 2	0.083	169	0.685	77	0.534	143
Type 3	0.070	96	0.035	108	0.273	162
Type 4	0.056	52	0.184	66	0.509	104
Type 5	0.132	14	0.157	27	0.359	27
Total	0.073	607	0.188	456	0.383	622

8.2 Informal support arrangements

Table A.10 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent received or paid informal support only, by types of families)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Type 2	0.03	0.0	-5.8**	0.6	0.5	-0.6	0.1	0.1	-3.0***
Type 3	0.87	0.2	-0.6	1.7	1.0	0.9	2.0	0.7	2.0*
Type 4	0.60	0.2	-1.6	1.4	1.0	0.5	0.9	0.4	-0.2
Type 5	0.29	0.2	-1.6	5.2	3.8	2.2**	0.9	0.7	-0.1

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.11 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent received or paid informal support only, by types of families and number of relevant children, age of youngest child, re-partnering, NRP working status, household poverty, distance between parents' homes, benefit status of PWC and mothers age)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Type 2	0.01	0.0	-6.5	0.3	0.3	-1.2	0.1	0.1	-3.3***
Type 3	1.05	0.3	0.2	1.0	0.7	0.0	2.6	1.0	2.3*
Type 4	0.46	0.2	-1.9+	0.6	0.5	-0.7	0.8	0.4	-0.6
Type 5	0.19	0.2	-1.8+	3.7	2.5	1.9+	0.7	0.6	-0.4
No relevant children									
1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2	0.6	0.1	-2.0*	0.5	0.5	-0.7	1.7	0.6	1.6
3+	0.6	0.3	-0.9	0.4	0.3	-1.0	0.8	0.5	-0.3+
Age youngest child									
0-4	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
5-9	0.9	0.3	-0.2	1.2	1.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	-1.6
10-15	1.1	0.3	0.4	1.7	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.3	-0.8
16-19	1.0	0.4	-0.1	0.9	1.4	-0.1	0.5	0.4	-0.9
Parent has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	1.0	0.3	0.0	3.4	2.5	1.6+	0.6	0.3	-1.1
NRP has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	0.8	0.2	-1.0	2.6	1.5	1.6	1.1	0.4	0.3
NRP working status									
Working	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Not working	2.6	1.0	2.6***	3.0	1.9	1.7+	1.8	0.9	1.1
DK	2.7	0.8	3.2***	-	-	-	1.4	0.5	0.9

Continued

Table A.11 Continued

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
HH poverty									
1st quintile	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2nd quintile	0.8	0.2	-1.0	2.0	2.3	0.6	0.9	0.6	-0.2
3rd quintile	0.5	0.2	-2.2*	8.7	8.1	2.3*	1.6	1.0	0.8
4th quintile	0.5	0.2	-1.7+	2.3	2.4	0.8	2.3	1.5	1.3
5th quintile	0.6	0.2	-1.3	0.2	0.3	-1.0	2.3	1.5	1.3
Distance									
Less than 15 minutes	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
15 to 30 minutes	1.0	0.3	0.1	1.0	0.6	-0.1	0.4	0.2	-2.1*
30 minutes to 1 hour	1.0	0.3	-0.1	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.5	0.3	-1.3
1 to 2 hours	0.9	0.4	-0.3	2.8	2.1	1.4	0.6	0.4	-0.8
More than 2 hours	0.7	0.3	-0.9	0.4	0.3	-1.2	0.6	0.3	-1.0
DK	-	-					2.3	1.1	1.6+
Benefits									
Yes	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
No	-	-	-	1.0	0.6	0.0	0.9	0.4	-0.2
Mother's age									
14-19	1.8	0.6	1.6	-	-	-	1.3	0.8	0.4
20-24	1.2	0.4	0.5	-	-	-	0.9	0.5	-0.2
25-29	0.7	0.2	-1.2	-	-	-	1.1	0.7	0.2
30+	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.12 Predicted probabilities whether respondent received or paid informal support only (based against probability for Type 1)

Type	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N
Type 1	0.368	277	0.041	177	0.099	186
Type 2	0.006	169	0.011	57	0.008	144
Type 3	0.379	96	0.042	107	0.219	163
Type 4	0.212	50	0.025	60	0.078	104
Type 5	0.099	14	0.136	27	0.074	28
Total	0.250	606	0.041	428	0.105	625

8.3 Both formal child maintenance arrangements and paid or received informal support

Table A.13 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent had a formal child maintenance arrangement and paid or received informal support, by types of families)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Type 2	0.01	0.0	-5.0***	0.02	0.0	-7.8***	0.08	0.0	-7.8***
Type 3	0.78	0.2	-1.1	0.90	0.4	-0.3	0.63	0.1	-2.0*
Type 4	0.24	0.1	-3.8***	0.25	0.1	-3.7***	0.20	0.1	-5.5***
Type 5	0.82	0.5	-0.4	0.23	0.1	-3.0**	0.18	0.1	-3.5***

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.14 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent had a formal child maintenance arrangement and paid or received informal support, by types of families and number of relevant children, age of youngest child, re-partnering, NRP working status, household poverty, distance between parents' homes, benefit status of PWC and mothers age)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs			
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	t
Type 1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
Type 2	0.02	0.0	-3.9***	0.02	0.0	-7.6***	0.09	0.0	-6.8	0.0***
Type 3	0.68	0.2	-1.5	1.00	0.4	0.0	0.50	0.1	-2.7	0.0**
Type 4	0.55	0.2	-1.3	0.34	0.1	-2.6**	0.17	0.1	-5.4	0.0***
Type 5	1.19	0.7	0.3	0.29	0.2	-2.2*	0.17	0.1	-3.6	0.0***
No relevant children										
1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
2	1.3	0.3	1.0	1.3	0.5	0.8	1.0	0.2	-0.2	0.9
3+	1.2	0.6	0.4	1.7	1.6	0.6	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.8
Age youngest child										
0-4	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
5-9	1.5	0.5	1.4	1.4	0.5	0.8	1.0	0.3	-0.1	1.0
10-15	1.8	0.6	1.9+	1.4	0.5	0.9	2.1	0.6	2.6	0.0***
16-19	1.1	0.5	0.3	4.0	4.1	1.3	1.6	0.9	0.8	0.5
Parent has re-partnered										
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
Yes	0.8	0.2	-1.0	1.1	0.3	0.2	1.0	0.3	-0.1	1.0
NRP has re-partnered										
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
Yes	1.3	0.3	1.0	0.8	0.2	-0.8	0.8	0.2	-1.2	0.3
NRP working status										
Working	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
Not working	0.1	0.1	-3.6***	0.5	0.2	-2.0*	1.1	0.4	0.2	0.9
DK	0.2	0.1	-5.0***	-	-	-	0.4	0.1	-2.7	0.0***

Continued

Table A.14 Continued

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs			
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	t
HH poverty										
1st quintile	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
2nd quintile	0.8	0.2	-0.7	0.8	0.4	-0.4	1.3	0.4	0.8	0.5
3rd quintile	1.6	0.5	1.5	0.4	0.2	-2.1*	1.6	0.5	1.3	0.2
4th quintile	0.8	0.3	-0.8	0.4	0.2	-1.8+	1.0	0.3	0.0	1.0
5th quintile	0.7	0.3	-0.8	0.7	0.4	-0.7	0.9	0.3	-0.3	0.8
Distance										
less than 15 minutes	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
15 to 30 minutes	1.4	0.4	1.1	1.2	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.3	0.2	0.9
30 minutes to 1 hour	1.4	0.5	1.0	0.9	0.4	-0.1	1.7	0.6	1.5	0.1
1 to 2 hours	0.9	0.4	-0.4	0.6	0.3	-1.1	1.1	0.5	0.3	0.7
more than 2 hours	1.0	0.4	0.0	1.7	0.9	1.0	1.5	0.5	1.3	0.2
DK	-						0.7	0.3	-1.0	0.3
Benefits										
Yes	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
No	-	-	-	0.9	0.3	-0.5	1.5	0.4	1.5	0.12
Mother's age										
14-19	0.5	0.2	-1.6+	-	-	-	0.6	0.2	-1.5	0.15
20-24	0.9	0.3	-0.2	-	-	-	0.6	0.2	-1.3	0.19
25-29	1.2	0.4	0.7	-	-	-	1.0	0.4	0.0	0.97
30+	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.15 Predicted probabilities whether respondent had a formal child maintenance arrangement and paid or received informal support

Type	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N
Type 1	0.484	275	0.880	178	0.558	186
Type 2	0.019	168	0.137	77	0.104	143
Type 3	0.388	96	0.880	108	0.385	162
Type 4	0.342	50	0.716	66	0.176	104
Type 5	0.526	14	0.679	27	0.173	27
Total	0.328	603	0.719	456	0.328	622

8.4 Neither formal arrangement nor paid or received informal support

Table A.16 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent had neither formal arrangement nor paid or received informal support, by types of families)

	Non-CSA PWCs				CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1	-	-		1	-	-	1	-	-
Type 2	247.26	103.2	13.2	0.00***	56.25	0.5	-0.6	31.27	19.9	5.4***
Type 3	1.78	0.7	1.4	0.15	4.28	1.0	0.9	6.10	4.0	2.7**
Type 4	12.32	4.4	7.0	0.00***	13.96	1.0	0.5	17.19	11.2	4.4***
Type 5	5.49	3.5	2.7	0.01**	-	-	-	30.83	22.5	4.7***

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.17 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent had neither formal arrangement nor paid or received informal support, by types of families and number of relevant children, age of youngest child, re-partnering, NRP working status, household poverty, distance between parents' homes, benefit status of PWC and mother's age)

	Non-CSA PWCs				CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Type 2	185.58	96.4	10.1	0.00***	96.35	123.9	3.6***	23.15	15.3	4.8***
Type 3	1.36	0.6	0.7	0.51	6.14	7.8	1.4	6.01	3.9	2.8**
Type 4	4.96	2.5	3.2	0.00***	26.33	35.1	2.5*	13.93	9.1	4.0***
Type 5	10.29	7.0	3.4	0.00***	-	-	-	30.48	23.3	4.5***
No relevant children										
1	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2	1.0	0.4	0.0	0.98	0.8	0.7	-0.2	1.3	0.4	0.8
3+	1.8	1.1	0.9	0.35	-	-	-	0.8	0.4	-0.6
Age youngest child										
0-4	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
5-9	0.8	0.3	-0.4	0.67	3.3	3.4	1.2	0.8	0.2	-0.8
10-15	0.3	0.1	-2.5	0.01**	1.1	1.2	0.1	0.5	0.2	-1.8+
16-19	0.5	0.2	-1.5	0.12	-	-	-	0.8	0.5	-0.3
Parent has re-partnered										
No	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	2.0	1.0	1.3	0.19	0.9	0.7	-0.2	1.0	0.4	0.1
NRP has re-partnered										
No	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	0.5	0.2	-1.8	0.08+	0.3	0.2	-1.7	0.9	0.2	-0.4

Continued

Table A.17 Continued

	Non-CSA PWCs				CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
NRP working status										
Working	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Not working	6.8	3.6	3.6	0.00***	6.9	5.4	2.4**	1.5	0.8	0.8
DK	2.8	1.2	2.4	0.02*	-	-	-	2.1	0.6	2.4*
HH poverty										
1st quintile	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2nd quintile	1.6	0.9	0.8	0.42	3.1	3.9	0.9	1.4	0.7	0.7
3rd quintile	1.5	0.8	0.8	0.42	4.3	7.3	0.9**	1.3	0.6	0.5
4th quintile	4.7	2.7	2.6	0.01**	2.8	4.4	0.7	1.3	0.6	0.5
5th quintile	4.5	2.8	2.5	0.01**	-	-	-	1.9	0.9	1.3
Distance										
less than 15 minutes	1.0	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
15 to 30 minutes	0.6	0.3	-1.0	0.34	0.3	0.3	-1.3	1.6	0.6	1.1
30 minutes to 1 hour	0.4	0.2	-1.6	0.11	0.3	0.3	-1.1	1.3	0.6	0.6
1 to 2 hours	0.5	0.3	-1.1	0.28	0.1	0.1	-1.8+	1.7	0.9	1.1
more than 2 hours	1.5	0.7	0.8	0.43	0.5	0.6	-0.6	1.8	0.8	1.3
DK	1.2	0.7	0.4	0.72				1.6	0.7	1.1
Benefits										
Yes	-	-	-		1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
No	-	-	-		1.9	1.6	0.7	1.3	0.4	0.83
Mother's age										
14-19	1.1	0.6	0.2	0.88	-	-	-	1.9	0.8	1.4
20-24	1.4	0.8	0.6	0.58	-	-	-	1.6	0.7	1.2
25-29	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.77	-	-	-	1.1	0.5	0.1
30+	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.18 Predicted probabilities whether respondent neither formal arrangement nor paid or received informal support (based against Type 1)

Type	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N
Type 1	0.069	277	0.006	144	0.019	186
Type 2	0.932	169	0.380	51	0.310	144
Type 3	0.091	96	0.038	82	0.105	163
Type 4	0.267	50	0.144	45	0.213	104
Type 5	0.431	14	-	-	0.372	28
Total	0.338	606	0.093	322	0.157	625

8.5 Confidence in using improved information and support services to make private arrangements

Table A.19 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent thought they would be confident or very confident to make to make a private arrangement using improved information and support services, by types of families)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Type 2	0.13	0.03	-8.8***	0.21	0.08	-4.2***	0.31	0.09	-4.2***
Type 3	0.33	0.08	-4.5***	0.42	0.12	-3.1***	0.24	0.07	-5.0***
Type 4	0.47	0.14	-2.5**	0.34	0.11	-3.4***	0.29	0.09	-3.8***
Type 5	0.38	0.21	-1.8+	0.21	0.10	-3.3***	0.27	0.15	-2.3*

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.20 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent thought they would be confident or very confident to make a private arrangement using improved information and support services, by types of families and number of relevant children, age of youngest child, re-partnering, NRP working status, household poverty, distance between parents' homes, benefit status of PWC and mothers age)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Type 2	0.22	0.08	-4.4***	0.36	0.14	-2.7**	0.25	0.08	-4.3***
Type 3	0.34	0.09	-4.2***	0.49	0.15	-2.3*	0.24	0.08	-4.5***
Type 4	0.71	0.26	-1.0	0.53	0.20	-1.7+	0.30	0.10	-3.5***
Type 5	0.50	0.31	-1.1	0.31	0.16	-2.3*	0.25	0.15	-2.3*
No relevant children									
1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2	0.9	0.2	-0.7	1.1	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.2	0.0
3+	1.4	0.5	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	2.2	0.7	2.3*
Age youngest child									
0-4	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
5-9	1.0	0.3	-0.1	0.7	0.2	-1.1	0.7	0.2	-1.3
10-15	0.8	0.2	-0.7	0.5	0.2	-1.9	0.8	0.2	-0.8
16-19	1.0	0.4	0.1	0.9	0.5	-0.3	1.7	0.8	1.2
Parent has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	0.9	0.2	-0.6	1.0	0.2	-0.1	1.7	0.5	1.9+
NRP has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	0.6	0.1	-2.3*	0.9	0.5	-0.3	1.0	0.2	-0.2
NRP working status									
Working	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Not working	0.8	0.3	-0.8	0.8	0.2	-0.6	0.7	0.3	-0.7
DK	0.7	0.2	-1.4	1.2	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.3	-0.4

Continued

Table A.20 Continued

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
HH poverty									
1st quintile	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2nd quintile	1.1	0.3	0.3	1.2	0.5	0.4	1.3	0.5	0.6
3rd quintile	0.6	0.2	-1.6	0.6	0.2	-1.2	0.8	0.3	-0.6
4th quintile	0.9	0.3	-0.5	0.7	0.3	-0.8	0.7	0.3	-0.9
5th quintile	0.7	0.2	-1.2	0.5	0.2	-1.5	1.0	0.4	0.1
Distance									
Less than 15 minutes	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
15 to 30 minutes	1.3	0.4	0.8	1.0	0.3	0.0	1.9	0.5	2.2*
30 minutes to 1 hour	0.8	0.3	-0.5	1.0	0.3	-0.1	0.9	0.4	-0.3
1 to 2 hours	0.7	0.3	-1.1	1.0	0.5	0.0	1.7	0.6	1.5
More than 2 hours	0.8	0.3	-0.7	1.6	0.6	1.3	1.6	0.6	1.2
DK	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.2	0.9	1.9*
Benefits									
Yes	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
No	-	-	-	0.6	0.2	-1.7+	0.6	0.2	-1.9*
Mother's age									
14-19	0.7	0.2	-1.1	-	-	-	1.2	0.5	0.4
20-24	0.7	0.2	-1.3	-	-	-	1.2	0.5	0.5
25-29	1.0	0.3	0.1	-	-	-	1.2	0.5	0.4
30+	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	1.0	-	-

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.21 Predicted probabilities whether respondent thought they would be confident or very confident to make a private arrangement using improved information and support services (based against Type 1)

Type	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N
Type 1	0.667	276	0.718	175	0.410	185
Type 2	0.308	166	0.475	74	0.148	143
Type 3	0.404	96	0.555	106	0.141	162
Type 4	0.587	49	0.573	65	0.172	104
Type 5	0.498	14	0.439	26	0.146	27
Total	0.515	601	0.601	446	0.228	621

8.6 Likelihood of making a private arrangement with help from a trained impartial adviser

Table A.22 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent thought they would be likely or very likely to make a private arrangement if they had help from a trained, impartial adviser, by types of families)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Type 2	0.19	0.05	-6.3***	0.21	0.08	-4.3***	0.17	0.04	-7.0***
Type 3	0.44	0.16	-2.3*	0.67	0.23	-1.2	0.41	0.10	-3.7***
Type 4	0.35	0.13	-2.8**	0.94	0.36	-0.2	0.20	0.06	-5.8***
Type 5	0.80	0.72	-0.2	0.32	0.15	-2.5**	0.21	0.09	-3.6***

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.23 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent thought they would be likely or very likely to make a private arrangement if they had help from a trained, impartial adviser, by types of families and number of relevant children, age of youngest child, re-partnering, NRP working status, household poverty, distance between parents' homes, benefit status of PWC and mothers age)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Type 2	0.28	0.11	-3.4***	0.21	0.09	-3.8***	0.18	0.05	-5.7***
Type 3	0.49	0.20	-1.7	0.71	0.28	-0.9	0.41	0.11	-3.4***
Type 4	0.46	0.20	-1.8+	0.96	0.42	-0.1	0.22	0.06	-5.3***
Type 5	1.01	0.87	0.0	0.29	0.15	-2.4*	0.20	0.10	-3.2***
No relevant children									
1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2	1.1	0.3	0.5	1.1	0.4	0.4	1.6	0.3	2.2*
3+	1.3	0.7	0.5	0.8	0.3	-0.5	1.7	0.5	1.5
Age youngest child									
0-4	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
5-9	1.3	0.4	0.9	1.2	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.2	-0.7
10-15	1.1	0.3	0.4	1.6	0.6	1.2	0.9	0.2	-0.3
16-19	2.2	1.0	1.7+	2.9	2.1	1.5	1.2	0.6	0.4
Parent has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.2	-1.2	1.0	0.2	-0.1
NRP has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	0.9	0.2	-0.5	0.7	0.2	-1.2	0.8	0.2	-1.0
NRP working status									
Working	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Not working	0.7	0.3	-0.9	1.1	0.3	0.2	0.8	0.3	-0.6
DK	0.6	0.2	-1.6+	-	-	-	1.1	0.3	0.4

Continued

Table A.23 Continued

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
HH poverty									
1st quintile	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2nd quintile	1.1	0.4	0.2	1.1	0.5	0.1	1.0	0.3	-0.1
3rd quintile	0.7	0.3	-1.0	0.9	0.4	-0.3	1.0	0.3	-0.1
4th quintile	1.1	0.4	0.3	1.2	0.6	0.5	1.1	0.4	0.4
5th quintile	0.7	0.3	-1.0	1.2	0.5	0.3	0.9	0.3	-0.4
Distance									
Less than 15 minutes	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
15 to 30 minutes	1.4	0.5	0.9	0.6	0.2	-1.5	1.1	0.3	0.4
30 minutes to 1 hour	1.2	0.6	0.5	1.4	0.6	0.8	1.4	0.4	1.1
1 to 2 hours	2.3	1.4	1.4	1.1	0.6	0.2	1.1	0.4	0.2
More than 2 hours	1.5	0.7	1.0	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.2	-0.8
DK	-						1.0	0.4	0.0
Benefits									
Yes	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
No	-	-	-	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.8	0.2	-1.0
Mother's age									
14-19	1.1	0.4	0.1+	-	-	-	0.8	0.3	-0.5
20-24	0.9	0.3	-0.4+	-	-	-	0.8	0.3	-0.6
25-29	1.1	0.4	0.2	-	-	-	0.9	0.3	-0.2
30+	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.24 Predicted probabilities whether respondent thought they would be likely or very likely to make a private arrangement if they had help from a trained, impartial adviser (based against Type 1)

Type	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N
Type 1	0.711	175	0.822	172	0.727	184
Type 2	0.405	74	0.494	77	0.321	142
Type 3	0.548	106	0.767	108	0.523	161
Type 4	0.528	65	0.815	65	0.365	104
Type 5	0.712	26	0.570	27	0.353	27
Total	0.595	446	0.736	449	0.503	618

8.7 Likelihood of using C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable

Table A.25 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent thought they would be likely or very likely to use C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable, by types of families)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Type 2	1.00	0.20	0.0	2.03	0.69	2.1*	1.21	0.39	0.6
Type 3	2.86	0.72	4.2***	2.26	0.69	2.7**	1.58	0.50	1.4
Type 4	2.15	0.67	2.5*	1.55	0.52	1.3	1.99	0.77	1.8+
Type 5	1.39	0.76	0.6	1.85	0.92	1.2	0.68	0.33	-0.8

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.26 Logistic regression (dependent variable = whether respondent thought they would be likely or very likely to use C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable, by types of families and number of relevant children, age of youngest child, re-partnering, NRP working status, household poverty, distance between parents' homes, benefit status of PWC and mothers age)

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
Type 1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Type 2	1.50	0.48	1.3	1.46	0.57	1.0	1.57	0.65	1.1
Type 3	2.88	0.77	4.0***	2.11	0.68	2.3*	1.42	0.51	1.0
Type 4	2.29	0.82	2.3*	1.46	0.55	1.0	2.37	0.99	2.1*
Type 5	1.64	0.95	0.9	1.79	0.99	1.0	0.70	0.40	-0.6
No relevant children									
1	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2	0.9	0.2	-0.5	0.9	0.2	-0.6	1.3	0.4	1.0
3+	2.2	0.9	1.9+	1.3	0.7	0.5	1.1	0.5	0.3
Age youngest child									
0-4	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
5-9	0.6	0.2	-1.8+	1.1	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.3	-0.8
10-15	0.6	0.1	-2.1*	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.2	-1.6
16-19	0.8	0.3	-0.6	2.3	1.3	1.5	0.8	0.5	-0.5
Parent has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	0.7	0.2	-1.3	1.6	0.4	1.9+	1.3	0.5	0.8
NRP has re-partnered									
No	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Yes	1.0	0.2	-0.2	1.0	0.3	-0.1	1.4	0.3	1.3
NRP working status									
Working	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
Not working	0.8	0.3	-0.7	0.7	0.2	-1.1	0.6	0.3	-1.1
DK	0.7	0.2	-1.2	-	-	-	0.8	0.3	-0.8

Continued

Table A.26 Continued

	Non-CSA PWCs			CSA NRPs			CSA PWCs		
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	t
HH poverty									
1st quintile	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
2nd quintile	1.6	0.4	1.9+	3.5	1.3	3.4***	0.7	0.3	-0.7
3rd quintile	1.5	0.4	1.4	2.9	1.1	2.8***	1.0	0.4	0.0
4th quintile	2.1	0.6	2.4*	2.6	1.0	2.4*	1.4	0.6	0.7
5th quintile	2.3	0.8	2.7**	2.1	0.9	1.7+	1.1	0.5	0.1
Distance									
Less than 15 minutes	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
15 to 30 minutes	1.0	0.3	-0.1	1.2	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.3	-0.8
30 minutes to 1 hour	0.9	0.3	-0.3	1.2	0.4	0.6	0.9	0.4	-0.3
1 to 2 hours	0.6	0.3	-1.1	0.9	0.5	-0.1	1.1	0.5	0.2
More than 2 hours	0.9	0.3	-0.3	2.3	1.0	2.0*	0.6	0.3	-1.1
DK	-						0.6	0.3	-1.1
Benefits									
Yes	-	-	-	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	-
No	-	-	-	1.2	0.3	0.7	1.3	0.4	0.8
Mother's age									
14-19	1.5	0.4	1.4		-	-	1.0	0.5	0.1
20-24	0.9	0.2	-0.3		-	-	1.8	0.8	1.3
25-29	1.1	0.3	0.4		-	-	2.2	1.1	1.6
30+	1.0	-	-		-	-	1.0	-	-

+ = significant at 10% level, ** = significant at 5% level, *** = significant at 1% level.

Table A.27 Predicted probabilities whether respondent thought they would be likely or very likely to use C-MEC for assessment of amount of maintenance payable (based against Type 1)

Type	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N	Predicted probabilities	N
Type 1	0.417	271	0.575	174	0.809	183
Type 2	0.517	164	0.664	75	0.869	141
Type 3	0.673	95	0.741	106	0.858	163
Type 4	0.621	49	0.664	62	0.910	103
Type 5	0.539	14	0.708	26	0.748	28
Total	0.506	593	0.650	443	0.850	618

9 Weighting

Weights were applied to correct for any unequal selection probabilities and to attempt to reduce bias from differential non-response. The weighting strategies for the four groups were considered independently, assessing the suitability for weighting, the most-appropriate approach and what information was available to generate the weights.

9.1 CSA PWCs

The sampling for the CSA samples was designed to ensure that each parent could only be selected once and that both parents for the same case number could not both be selected. This was done by randomly sampling one case when parents were involved with the CSA for more than one child, and also one of the parents when both lived in the areas selected for the sample. Selection weights were produced to allow for this stage of sampling. No other selection weights were applied for the CSA PWCs sample, as the rest of the sample was selected with equal probability.

A non-response weight was produced by modelling whether the PWCs responded or not against suitable measures available from the CSA database. The three measures that were associated with response were: Jobcentre Plus compared to Private; the NatCen field area; and the PWC's marital status (Miss, Mr, Mrs, Ms).

Table A.28 Non-response weights

	b	s.e.	Wald statistic	d.f.	p-value	exp(b)
Intake:			20.2	1	<0.001	
Jobcentre Plus	0.000	(baseline)				
Private	0.573	0.127	20.2	1	<0.001	1.773
Title:			10.9	3	0.013	
Miss	0.000	(baseline)				
Mr	0.353	0.139	6.5	1	0.011	1.424
Mrs	0.413	0.242	2.9	1	0.088	1.511
Ms	-0.371	0.306	1.5	1	0.225	0.690
NatCen Field Area:			15.5	8	0.050	
0	0.000	(baseline)				
1	0.371	0.344	1.2	1	0.280	1.450
2	0.198	0.313	0.4	1	0.527	1.219
3	0.699	0.323	4.7	1	0.030	2.011
4	0.276	0.318	0.8	1	0.385	1.318
6	0.600	0.360	2.8	1	0.096	1.821
7	0.586	0.321	3.3	1	0.068	1.797
8	-0.076	0.338	0.1	1	0.822	0.927
9	0.508	0.354	2.1	1	0.151	1.662
Intercept	-0.553	0.291	3.6	1	0.057	0.575

The non-response weights were calculated as the reciprocal of the predicated probability of response based on the model. The non-response weights were multiplied by the selection weights to obtain the final weights for the CSA PWCs.

9.2 CSA NRPs

As for the CSA PWCs, selection weights were calculated to allow for the sampling of one case when parents were involved with the CSA for more than one child, and also of one parent when both lived in the areas selected for the sample. In addition, a selection weight was applied to allow for the unequal selection of NRPs from the two CSA databases (CSCS and CS2).

A non-response weight was produced by modelling whether the NRPs responded or not against suitable measures available from the CSA database. The four measures that were associated with response were: Jobcentre Plus compared to Private (compared to CS2); NatCen field area; level of compliance; and whether a telephone number was available.

Table A.29 Non-response weights

	b	s.e.	Wald statistic	d.f.	p-value	exp(b)
Level of compliance:	15.7	3	0.001			
Fully	0.000	(baseline)				
Partially	0.262	0.157	2.8	1	0.096	1.299
Nil	-0.317	0.172	3.4	1	0.065	0.729
N/A	-0.234	0.153	2.3	1	0.125	0.791
Intake:	0.000	(baseline)	27.5	2	<0.001	
Jobcentre Plus	-0.611	0.120	25.8	1	<0.001	0.543
Private	-0.021	0.186	0.0	1	0.912	0.980
Whether phone number was available:			18.2	1	<0.001	
No	0.000	(baseline)				
Yes	0.598	0.140	18.2	1	<0.001	1.818
NatCen Field Area:			17.0	8	0.030	
0	0.000	(baseline)				
1	0.574	0.336	2.9	1	0.087	1.775
2	0.356	0.307	1.3	1	0.246	1.427
3	0.678	0.306	4.9	1	0.027	1.971
4	0.122	0.311	0.2	1	0.696	1.129
6	0.169	0.342	0.2	1	0.620	1.185
7	0.093	0.316	0.1	1	0.767	1.098
8	0.080	0.325	0.1	1	0.805	1.084
9	0.455	0.326	1.9	1	0.163	1.576
Intercept	-1.362	0.318	18.3	1	<0.001	0.256

The non-response weights were calculated as the reciprocal of the predicated probability of response based on the model. The non-response weights was multiplied by the selection weights to obtain the final weights for the CSA NRPs.

9.3 Non-CSA PWCs

The sample for the non-CSA PWCs was selected with equal probability, and so no selection weights were required. In addition, no measures were found to be associated with compliance with the screening questionnaire and, so no non-response weights were produced. Therefore, the weights for analysis of the non-CSA PWCs were all set to be equal to 1.

9.4 Non-CSA NRPs

Because the composite response rate for this group was very low (<10 per cent), it was decided that weighting would be extremely unlikely to improve the bias in the sample. Therefore, the weights for analysis of the non-CSA NRPs were all set to be equal to 1.

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