

UK Child Maintenance Policy and some International Comparisons of Outcomes

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Child Maintenance

International Perspectives and Policy Challenges

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Abstract

There has been a paradigmatic shift in the child maintenance policy framework for separated families in the UK. Arguably, the new approach under the 2008 and 2012 Acts sees child maintenance decoupled from the social security benefits system for the first time. Parents dependent on social assistance benefits are not only free to come to their own 'family based arrangements' outside the statutory scheme, but can now keep all the child maintenance that is paid in addition to any social assistance payments they might receive. This presentation is in two parts, it will give an overview of the development of child support policy in the UK, describe the early policy aims and drivers and consider the current operational framework with a focus on the new relationship support services. It will then go on to describe the outcomes in the determination of maintenance amounts for a particular family type in a comparison of five countries (UK, US, Finland, Iceland and the Netherlands) before finishing by highlighting the current policy challenges for the UK.

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