

Press release: Separated parents working together on child maintenance arrangements

The parents of more than 15,900 children have set up 'family-based arrangements' for paying child maintenance after receiving information and support from Child Maintenance Options, which was set up in 2008 to help separated parents work together in the best interests of their children.

Child Maintenance Options provides free, impartial support to help parents come to their own arrangements. Then, if that is not possible, they can turn to the Child Maintenance Service (CMS). The CMS supports parents to manage payments between themselves where they can, and helps those in difficult or vulnerable situations.

Minister for Welfare Delivery Caroline Nokes said:

We know children grow up to have better health, emotional well-being and educational attainment if their parents – whether together or separated – have a positive relationship. All children deserve the best start in life and that's why, through Child Maintenance Options, we encourage separated couples to work together in the best interests of their children.

But we also understand a minority of separated parents, especially those in difficult or vulnerable circumstances, won't be able to come to their own arrangements and our staff can give them that extra help.

Of the family based arrangements made by parents, for 87%, payments were regularly being made and a parent said it was working well.

The CMS is replacing the old Child Support Agency, which failed families because it was overly complex and did not encourage collaboration, plus did not provide value for taxpayers' money.

Child Maintenance Options is there to help parents work things out. [Child Maintenance Options](#) is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements.

Talking about child maintenance might feel like the last thing you want to do, especially if your relationship with the other parent is strained. But, in the long run, having this conversation as early as possible could mean you end up working together as parents rather than against each other.

DWP Child Maintenance Options Service Manager Ian Wilkins said:

It can be tough when a family separates, but we know it is better for children if their parents can work together to reach an agreement on caring for them, including decisions about financial arrangements. Our staff are highly trained in providing support to separated, and separating, parents and have vast experience of dealing with a wide range of separation issues. If you require any information or support, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Ian's 5 steps to working together on a family-based arrangement for your children:

Step 1 – Find the right time

Sitting down to work out a child maintenance arrangement might seem a bit of a daunting task. But the quicker you can work out an arrangement, the clearer your child's future will seem and the more secure you'll feel.

Step 2 – Work out what your child needs

The next step is to work out what your child needs, and how much this will cost. All children need clothes, food, and a roof over their heads. You might also need to think about child care costs or other costs dependent upon the age of your child.

Step 3 – Decide how you will share the cost

How you share the cost of raising your child is for you and your ex-partner to decide. For example, you might agree to 'split the difference', or vary it according to how much money you each earn.

Step 4 – Write it down

This way you'll both have a record of what's been agreed, and will have made a joint commitment to sticking to it.

Step 5 – Do it and review it

Some parents decide to review their family-based arrangement every year, or when children reach milestones like birthdays or a change in schools.

Our website, www.cmoptions.org, contains a wealth of information about family-based arrangements, other ways of arranging child maintenance, as well as a library of tools, leaflets and information to help parents to calculate and talk about child maintenance, record a family-based arrangement and manage their finances.

To speak to someone at Child Maintenance Options call 0800 988 0988.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0203 267 5111

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Press release: National roll-out of new approach to great crested newt licensing

The new approach has been piloted in partnership with Woking borough council in Surrey. It has focused on bringing the greatest benefits to the amphibians while streamlining the licensing process for housing developers. The approach will now start to be introduced across the country after its roll-out was announced in the Department for Communities and Local Government's Housing White Paper today.

This new 3-year programme will survey areas where newts are most prevalent, map the potential impacts of development and propose local conservation strategies for the species in partnership. As part of the project, great crested newt habitat is enhanced or created prior to any development taking place, saving developers time and money, and making newt populations more healthy and resilient.

In May 2016, Woking borough council was awarded an organisational licence, allowing it to authorise operations that may affect great crested newts on development sites at the same time as planning permission, removing the need for expensive surveys prior to building works and individual licences to disturb newts if they are present. As part of the project, great crested newt habitat is enhanced or created prior to any development taking place, saving developers time and money, and making newt populations more healthy and resilient.

Natural England's Chairman, Andrew Sells, said:

We are grateful to DCLG for funding the national roll-out of this ambitious new approach to the licensing of great crested newts. It is a ringing endorsement of Natural England's work to modernise the licensing of protected species.

Populations of great crested newts can struggle when they become isolated. Creating connected habitats across the country is the single most positive thing we can do for their survival, by allowing them to spread naturally.

At the same time, the strategic approach to licensing helps developers to avoid costs and delays to their projects. This roll-out is key to helping us ensure that regulation better serves both the natural environment and the economy.

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said:

We are taking decisive action to support developers to build out more quickly so that we can deliver the homes this country needs.

This new approach to managing great crested newts will not only ensure the continued protection of this rare species and its habitat, but will safeguard developers from the delays, costs and uncertainty which have so often restricted the job of building new homes.

Great crested newts are rare across Europe, although can be locally abundant in the UK. They are protected by law, meaning that disturbance or damage to the newts or their habitat requires a European protected species licence. Currently, licences for this striking amphibian are issued on a site-by-site basis. National implementation of the new approach will benefit newts at population level across the landscape.

Dr Tony Gent, CEO of Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, said:

The regulations and planning processes that have been put in place to help conserve the great crested newt have too often failed to provide the long term conservation outcomes that they need to reverse the historic and continuing declines of its populations.

This new initiative provides an opportunity for real gains for great crested newts, by improving the way that regulations are applied. We are keen to work with Natural England on this initiative to ensure that real, sustainable benefits can be achieved for the species.

Stephen Trotter, Director, The Wildlife Trusts England, said:

I welcome the announcement of this funding – it's potentially great news for newts. Natural England has listened to concerns about how the new system will be rolled-out and this funding gives some reassurance that the Government's commitment to the conservation and recovery of this declining amphibian is genuine. The Wildlife Trusts support the aims and objectives of the new approach. We strongly agree that everyone's priority should be to create new, joined-up habitats which will help the population of this fantastic species to recover. The Wildlife Trusts will work closely with Natural England to ensure the roll-out of the new approach is a success.

President of the Country Land and Business Association, Ross Murray, said:

The licensing process is one of the most cited sources of frustration and cost for our members seeking to invest in building homes or business premises in the countryside. The harm is particularly felt by those pursuing small scale developments.

This initiative has the potential to transform habitat preservation for important species, while at the same time reducing costs and uncertainty for landowners considering development across England.

We welcome the proactive way that Natural England has sought to address this problem and to Ministers for having the confidence to provide the necessary investment to roll this out.

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[Press release: Appeal after hen harrier disappears on north Yorkshire moorland](#)

From:

First published:

7 February 2017

North Yorkshire Police is appealing for information following the loss of a hen harrier in Upper Swaledale.

Mick, a young male, fledged in Northumberland last summer. He was fitted with a satellite tag in July by a hen harrier expert from Natural England. His tag stopped transmitting on 21 December 2016 in the Thwaite area of North Yorkshire. A search of the area has been carried out but no trace of the bird or equipment has been found.

Natural England reported Mick's disappearance to North Yorkshire Police and is working closely with wildlife crime officers, local landowners, the Moorland Association and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

The loss of another juvenile hen harrier brings the total to five within four months across northern England – and is a serious blow to the small English hen harrier population. Interference with hen harriers is a criminal offence.

Rob Cooke, a Director at Natural England, said:

The disappearance of a hen harrier is deeply concerning to all who appreciate these rare and impressive birds. Any information that can shed light on what has happened to Mick will be gratefully received by North Yorkshire Police.

David Butterworth, Chief Executive at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority said:

It's incredibly disappointing that the Yorkshire Dales' reputation as a wonderful place to visit is being damaged by incidents like this. We have pledged to provide whatever support we can to help the Police and Natural England find out what happened in this particular case.

Anyone with any information which could help police with their enquiries should contact North Yorkshire Police on 101, or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111. Please quote reference number 12170014975 when passing information.

[Greens slam Government as EU prepares to take UK to court over air pollution failures](#)



7 February 2017

*** Keith Taylor MEP: "The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than 50,000 people in Britain every year."**

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has slammed the Conservative government for its consistent failure to tackle the air pollution crisis, as the EU prepares to [escalate action against the UK](#) for breaching air quality laws.

The latest EU review has revealed multiple failings by the UK Government in applying environmental law, with Britain being in breach of vital EU nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) limits since 2010 and London overshooting its whole 2017 limit in the first five days of the year.

It is understood that the results of the review will be sent on 15 February to the UK. A court case at the European Court of Justice could follow if the

UK Government fails to send a satisfactory response to the findings.

Keith Taylor MEP, a vocal air quality campaigner, is urging the UK government to finally take seriously its responsibility for the health of British citizens.

“The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than [50,000 people in Britain every year](#).”

“The failure highlighted by the European Commission review is as much moral as it is legal; Ministers have displayed an extremely concerning attitude of indifference towards their duty to safeguard the health of British citizens.”

“That the European Commission is having to hold to account this government for a public health crisis that costs the British public [more than £20bn a year](#) is a shameful indictment of the Conservatives’ irresponsible and deadly apathy.”

“Theresa May’s administration is failing to do even the bare minimum, as required by EU laws the UK itself helped to set, to improve the quality of the air we all breathe. The bare minimum.”

“Where embraced and enforced, EU air pollution limits are helping to [prevent thousands of deaths every year](#) and saving [billions of pounds](#) in direct health costs. In fact, this government [readily acknowledges](#) that it is EU law that has been the driver of any positive air quality action in the UK. For the sake of the health and prosperity of the British people, we cannot risk scrapping these safeguards.”

“The government must finally face up to its moral and legal responsibility for tackling Britain’s air quality crisis. Ministers must now be forced to make a firm commitment to abiding by and fully implementing EU air quality laws. Theresa May must also make maintaining and strengthening these vital protections a priority as Britain prepares to leave the EU.”

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[Press release: Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood statement on](#)

Israel's Land Regularisation Bill

From:

First published:

7 February 2017

Part of:

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood statement on Israel's Land Regularisation Bill being passed through the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset.

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood said:

It is of great concern that the bill paves the way for significant growth in settlements deep in the West Bank, threatening the viability of the two-state solution.

As a longstanding friend of Israel, I condemn the passing of the Land Regularisation Bill by the Knesset, which damages Israel's standing with its international partners.

We reiterate our support for a two-state solution leading to a secure Israel that is safe from terrorism, and a contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

Further information