



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending
watchdog

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Reference FOI-1615

Date 11 May 2023

CHILD MAINTENANCE SERVICE

Thank you for your correspondence to the National Audit Office of 4th May 2023 concerning the child maintenance service. You asked to be provided with information about the specific recipients of money paid into the 1993 and 2003 Child Maintenance Schemes Client Funds Accounts. We therefore handled your request in accordance with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your specific request is reproduced at **Annex A** for your reference.

We have carried out a thorough search for the information you requested and established that we do not hold the information. We do not ask the Department for Work & Pensions for this data to be transferred to us as part of our annual audits of the Child Maintenance Group because it is personal data.

In addition, it may be helpful to explain that were we to hold information about individuals paid by the child maintenance schemes, we would not be able to disclose personal data about third parties as to do so would breach the data protection principles and the exemption in section 40(2) of the FOI Act would therefore apply.

We hope you find this response helpful. **Annex B** sets out the steps you may wish to take if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your request.

Yours sincerely,

NAO FOI Team

Annex A

Request for information:

"I would like to understand how Public services are being delivered and how taxpayer money is being distributed. I have conducted extensive research regarding the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) and how it operates and have some very serious concerns regarding how this Department conducts and applies the law. I have read the National Audit Office (NAO) reports dating back to 2012 when the Child Maintenance Service was formed. My understanding is that there is a legacy surrounding a debt on the client accounts between 1993 and 2003 of a staggering £3.798 billion.

I believe It is in the Public interest to know where the money from the 1993 and 2003 accounts are being paid and what total amount of money has been collected into these accounts.

I, therefore, respectfully request that you provide me with who the recipient/beneficiary of this debt is and where this money has been allocated. These are vast amounts of money that do not appear to have been subjected to full accountability/audit."

Annex B

Statement of Policy

Our policy is to respond to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as helpfully and promptly as possible, having regard to the principles set out in the Act. I therefore hope you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not, then you should take the following steps.

In the first instance, within 40 working days, write to the National Audit Office Freedom of Information (FOI) Team at FOI@nao.org.uk or by post to:

FOI Team, Green 2, National Audit Office, 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SP

The Head of FOI will arrange a review, which will be conducted by a senior member of staff who was not involved in decisions relating to your original request. Once the review has been completed, we will write informing you of the outcome.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

<https://ico.org.uk/> or Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF