



From the Minister of State
for Work and Pensions

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Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE
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Following our helpful telephone conversation last week, I wanted to provide some clarification and reassurance on the use of child maintenance statistics in a recent press notice from the Department for Work and Pensions.

In our most recent Child Support Agency Quarterly Summary of Statistics, published on 15 May 2013, the Maintenance Outcomes rate is stated as 81%. This means that 81% of non-resident parents are paying towards the child maintenance they owe. Cases are counted as having a positive maintenance outcome if they have received a payment via the collection service in the quarter or have a Maintenance Direct agreement in place at the end of the quarter.


In our press notice of 20 May, the presentation of this Maintenance Outcomes rate was not accurate. The press notice stated that more than 4 in 5 parents are 'meeting their financial responsibility'. Instead, it should have stated that more than 4 in 5 parents are 'paying towards' their financial responsibility, reflecting the wording used in our press notice of 20 February.

I would like to reassure you that I take the accurate presentation of child maintenance figures seriously and am disappointed that the wrong wording was used in this case.

The Department has procedures in place to ensure that press notices that include statistics are reviewed by the relevant analyst. This helps to ensure that statements quoting statistics are factually correct and worded appropriately. This press notice was drafted in good faith and went through all the relevant procedures; but unfortunately, on this occasion the relevant wording was missed due to human error whilst assuring the use of the statistics.

I have asked child maintenance officials if there is any more that can be done to reduce the risk of this happening again. In future, a senior analyst will personally sign off all press releases and press office briefing which makes reference to statistics or management information on child maintenance. My officials can provide further details of this process to the UK Statistics Authority if required.

Once again, I would like to emphasise that I take this issue very seriously and am happy to discuss this further or provide additional information as necessary.

Kind regards,


STEVE WEBB MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS