



Child Support Act 1991

1991 CHAPTER 48

The basic principles

1 The duty to maintain.

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, each parent of a qualifying child is responsible for maintaining him.
- (2) For the purposes of this Act, an absent parent shall be taken to have met his responsibility to maintain any qualifying child of his by making periodical payments of maintenance with respect to the child of such amount, and at such intervals, as may be determined in accordance with the provisions of this Act.
- (3) Where a maintenance assessment made under this Act requires the making of periodical payments, it shall be the duty of the absent parent with respect to whom the assessment was made to make those payments.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 1 amended (5.4.1993) by [The Child Support \(Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements\) Regulations 1993 \(S.I. 1993/584\)](#), reg. 2(2), [Sch.2](#)

2 Welfare of children: the general principle.

Where, in any case which falls to be dealt with under this Act, the Secretary of State^{F1} ... is considering the exercise of any discretionary power conferred by this Act, he shall have regard to the welfare of any child likely to be affected by his decision.

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 2 repealed (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), s. 87(2), [Sch. 7 para. 18](#), [Sch. 8](#); [S.I. 1999/1510](#), art. 2(f)(iii)(g)(iii)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C2** S. 2 amended (5.4.1993) by [The Child Support \(Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements\) Regulations 1993 \(S.I. 1993/584\)](#), reg. 2(2), [Sch.2](#)

3 Meaning of certain terms used in this Act.

- (1) A child is a “qualifying child” if—
 - (a) one of his parents is, in relation to him, an absent parent; or
 - (b) both of his parents are, in relation to him, absent parents.
- (2) The parent of any child is an “absent parent”, in relation to him, if—
 - (a) that parent is not living in the same household with the child; and
 - (b) the child has his home with a person who is, in relation to him, a person with care.
- (3) A person is a “person with care”, in relation to any child, if he is a person—
 - (a) with whom the child has his home;
 - (b) who usually provides day to day care for the child (whether exclusively or in conjunction with any other person); and
 - (c) who does not fall within a prescribed category of person.
- (4) The Secretary of State shall not, under subsection (3)(c), prescribe as a category—
 - (a) parents;
 - (b) guardians;
 - (c) persons in whose favour residence orders under section 8 of the ^{M1}Children Act 1989 are in force;
 - (d) in Scotland, persons [^{F2}with whom a child is to live by virtue of a residence order under section 11 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.]
- (5) For the purposes of this Act there may be more than one person with care in relation to the same qualifying child.
- (6) Periodical payments which are required to be paid in accordance with a maintenance assessment are referred to in this Act as “child support maintenance”.
- (7) Expressions are defined in this section only for the purposes of this Act.

Textual Amendments

- F2** Words in s. 3(4)(d) substituted (1.11.1996) by [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995 \(c. 36\)](#), s. 105(1)(b), [Sch. 4 para. 52\(2\)](#); [S.I. 1996/2203](#), art. 3(3), [Sch.](#) (with arts. 4-7)

Commencement Information

- II** S. 3 wholly in force; s. 3 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 3(3)(c) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), art. 2, [Sch.](#); s. 3 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644](#), art. 2

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1989 c. 41.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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4 Child support maintenance.

- (1) A person who is, in relation to any qualifying child or any qualifying children, either the person with care or the absent parent may apply to the Secretary of State for a maintenance assessment to be made under this Act with respect to that child, or any of those children.
- (2) Where a maintenance assessment has been made in response to an application under this section the Secretary of State may, if the person with care or absent parent with respect to whom the assessment was made applies to him under this subsection, arrange for—
 - (a) the collection of the child support maintenance payable in accordance with the assessment;
 - (b) the enforcement of the obligation to pay child support maintenance in accordance with the assessment.
- (3) Where an application under subsection (2) for the enforcement of the obligation mentioned in subsection (2)(b) authorises the Secretary of State to take steps to enforce that obligation whenever he considers it necessary to do so, the Secretary of State may act accordingly.
- (4) A person who applies to the Secretary of State under this section shall, so far as that person reasonably can, comply with such regulations as may be made by the Secretary of State with a view to the Secretary of State^{F3}... being provided with the information which is required to enable—
 - (a) the absent parent to be traced (where that is necessary);
 - (b) the amount of child support maintenance payable by the absent parent to be assessed; and
 - (c) that amount to be recovered from the absent parent.
- (5) Any person who has applied to the Secretary of State under this section may at any time request him to cease acting under this section.
- (6) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to comply with any request made under subsection (5) (but subject to any regulations made under subsection (8)).
- (7) The obligation to provide information which is imposed by subsection (4)—
 - (a) shall not apply in such circumstances as may be prescribed; and
 - (b) may, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, be waived by the Secretary of State.
- (8) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such incidental, supplemental or transitional provision as he thinks appropriate with respect to cases in which he is requested to cease to act under this section.
- (9) No application may be made under this section if there is in force with respect to the person with care and absent parent in question a maintenance assessment made in response to an application under section 6.
- ^{F4}(10) No application may be made at any time under this section with respect to a qualifying child or any qualifying children if—
 - (a) there is in force a written maintenance agreement made before 5th April 1993, or a maintenance order, in respect of that child or those children and the person who is, at that time, the absent parent; or

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(b) benefit is being paid to, or in respect of, a parent with care of that child or those children.

(11) In subsection (10) “benefit” means any benefit which is mentioned in, or prescribed by regulations under, section 6(1).]

Textual Amendments

- F3** Words in s. 4(4) repealed (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), Sch. 7 para. 19, **Sch. 8**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(f)(iii)(g)(iii)
- F4** S. 4(10)(11) inserted (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), **ss. 18(1)**, 30(4); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C3** S. 4(6) modified (5.4.1993) by The Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations 1992 (S.I. 1992/1813), **reg. 52(8)**
- C4** S. 4(10): power to exclude conferred (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), **ss. 18(7)**, 30(4); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Commencement Information

- I2** S. 4 wholly in force; s. 4 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 4(4)(7)(8) in force at 17.6.1992 by S.I. 1992/1431, **art. 2, Sch.**; s. 4 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, **art. 2**

5 Child support maintenance: supplemental provisions.

- (1) Where—
- (a) there is more than one person with care of a qualifying child; and
 - (b) one or more, but not all, of them have parental responsibility for ^{F5}... the child;
- no application may be made for a maintenance assessment with respect to the child by any of those persons who do not have parental responsibility for ^{F5}... the child.
- (2) Where more than one application for a maintenance assessment is made with respect to the child concerned, only one of them may be proceeded with.
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision as to which of two or more applications for a maintenance assessment with respect to the same child is to be proceeded with.

Textual Amendments

- F5** Words in s. 5(1) repealed (1.11.1996) by Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (c. 36), s. 105(1)(b), Sch. 4 para. 52(3), **Sch. 5**; S.I. 1996/2203, art. 3(3), Sch. (with arts. 4-7)

Commencement Information

- I3** S. 5 wholly in force; s. 5 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); S. 5(3) in force at 17.6.1992 by S.I. 1992/1431, **art. 2, Sch.**; s. 5 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, **art. 2**

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[^{F6} Applications by those claiming or receiving benefit.

- (1) This section applies where income support, an income-based jobseeker's allowance or any other benefit of a prescribed kind is claimed by or in respect of, or paid to or in respect of, the parent of a qualifying child who is also a person with care of the child.
- (2) In this section, that person is referred to as "the parent".
- (3) The Secretary of State may—
 - (a) treat the parent as having applied for a maintenance calculation with respect to the qualifying child and all other children of the non-resident parent in relation to whom the parent is also a person with care; and
 - (b) take action under this Act to recover from the non-resident parent, on the parent's behalf, the child support maintenance so determined.
- (4) Before doing what is mentioned in subsection (3), the Secretary of State must notify the parent in writing of the effect of subsections (3) and (5) and section 46.
- (5) The Secretary of State may not act under subsection (3) if the parent asks him not to (a request which need not be in writing).
- (6) Subsection (1) has effect regardless of whether any of the benefits mentioned there is payable with respect to any qualifying child.
- (7) Unless she has made a request under subsection (5), the parent shall, so far as she reasonably can, comply with such regulations as may be made by the Secretary of State with a view to the Secretary of State's being provided with the information which is required to enable—
 - (a) the non-resident parent to be identified or traced;
 - (b) the amount of child support maintenance payable by him to be calculated; and
 - (c) that amount to be recovered from him.
- (8) The obligation to provide information which is imposed by subsection (7)—
 - (a) does not apply in such circumstances as may be prescribed; and
 - (b) may, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, be waived by the Secretary of State.
- (9) If the parent ceases to fall within subsection (1), she may ask the Secretary of State to cease acting under this section, but until then he may continue to do so.
- (10) The Secretary of State must comply with any request under subsection (9) (but subject to any regulations made under subsection (11)).
- (11) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such incidental or transitional provision as he thinks appropriate with respect to cases in which he is asked under subsection (9) to cease to act under this section.
- (12) The fact that a maintenance calculation is in force with respect to a person with care does not prevent the making of a new maintenance calculation with respect to her as a result of the Secretary of State's acting under subsection (3).]

Textual Amendments

- F6** S. 6 substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 3, 86(1)(a)(2)** (with **ss. 28, 83(6)**); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), **art. 2**, **Sch. Pt. 1**

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7 **Right of child in Scotland to apply for assessment.**

- (1) A qualifying child who has attained the age of 12 years and who is habitually resident in Scotland may apply to the Secretary of State for a maintenance assessment to be made with respect to him if—
 - (a) no such application has been made by a person who is, with respect to that child, a person with care or an absent parent; or
 - (b) the Secretary of State has not been authorised under section 6 to take action under this Act to recover child support maintenance from the absent parent (other than in a case where he has waived any requirement that he should be so authorised).
- (2) An application made under subsection (1) shall authorise the Secretary of State to make a maintenance assessment with respect to any other children of the absent parent who are qualifying children in the care of the same person as the child making the application.
- (3) Where a maintenance assessment has been made in response to an application under this section the Secretary of State may, if the person with care, the absent parent with respect to whom the assessment was made or the child concerned applies to him under this subsection, arrange for—
 - (a) the collection of the child support maintenance payable in accordance with the assessment;
 - (b) the enforcement of the obligation to pay child support maintenance in accordance with the assessment.
- (4) Where an application under subsection (3) for the enforcement of the obligation mentioned in subsection (3)(b) authorises the Secretary of State to take steps to enforce that obligation whenever he considers it necessary to do so, the Secretary of State may act accordingly.
- (5) Where a child has asked the Secretary of State to proceed under this section, the person with care of the child, the absent parent and the child concerned shall, so far as they reasonably can, comply with such regulations as may be made by the Secretary of State with a view to the Secretary of State^{F7}... being provided with the information which is required to enable—
 - (a) the absent parent to be traced (where that is necessary);
 - (b) the amount of child support maintenance payable by the absent parent to be assessed; and
 - (c) that amount to be recovered from the absent parent.
- (6) The child who has made the application (but not the person having care of him) may at any time request the Secretary of State to cease acting under this section.
- (7) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to comply with any request made under subsection (6) (but subject to any regulations made under subsection (9)).
- (8) The obligation to provide information which is imposed by subsection (5)—
 - (a) shall not apply in such circumstances as may be prescribed by the Secretary of State; and
 - (b) may, in such circumstances as may be so prescribed, be waived by the Secretary of State.

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- (9) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such incidental, supplemental or transitional provision as he thinks appropriate with respect to cases in which he is requested to cease to act under this section.
- [^{F8}(10) No application may be made at any time under this section by a qualifying child if there is in force a written maintenance agreement made before 5th April 1993, or a maintenance order, in respect of that child and the person who is, at that time, the absent parent.]

Textual Amendments

- F7** Words in s. 7(5) repealed (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), Sch. 7 para. 21, **Sch. 8**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(f)(iii)(g)(iii)
- F8** S. 7(10) inserted (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), **ss. 18(2)**, 30(4); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C5** S. 7(10): power to exclude conferred (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), **ss. 18(7)**, 30(4); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Commencement Information

- I4** S. 7 wholly in force; s. 7 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 7(5)(8)(9) in force at 17.6.1992 by S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, **Sch.**; s. 7 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2

8 Role of the courts with respect to maintenance for children.

- (1) This subsection applies in any case where [^{F9}the Secretary of State] would have jurisdiction to make a maintenance assessment with respect to a qualifying child and an absent parent of his on an application duly made by a person entitled to apply for such an assessment with respect to that child.
- (2) Subsection (1) applies even though the circumstances of the case are such that [^{F9}the Secretary of State] would not make an assessment if it were applied for.
- (3) In any case where subsection (1) applies, no court shall exercise any power which it would otherwise have to make, vary or revive any maintenance order in relation to the child and absent parent concerned.
- [^{F10}(3A) In any case in which section 4(10) or 7(10) prevents the making of an application for a maintenance assessment, and—
- (a) no application has been made for a maintenance assessment under section 6, or
 - (b) such an application has been made but no maintenance assessment has been made in response to it,
- subsection (3) shall have effect with the omission of the word “vary”.]
- (4) Subsection (3) does not prevent a court from revoking a maintenance order.
- (5) The Lord Chancellor or in relation to Scotland the Lord Advocate may by order provide that, in such circumstances as may be specified by the order, this section shall not prevent a court from exercising any power which it has to make a maintenance order in relation to a child if—

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- (a) a written agreement (whether or not enforceable) provides for the making, or securing, by an absent parent of the child of periodical payments to or for the benefit of the child; and
 - (b) the maintenance order which the court makes is, in all material respects, in the same terms as that agreement.
- (6) This section shall not prevent a court from exercising any power which it has to make a maintenance order in relation to a child if—
- (a) a maintenance assessment is in force with respect to the child;
 - (b) the amount of the child support maintenance payable in accordance with the assessment was determined by reference to the alternative formula mentioned in paragraph 4(3) of Schedule 1; and
 - (c) the court is satisfied that the circumstances of the case make it appropriate for the absent parent to make or secure the making of periodical payments under a maintenance order in addition to the child support maintenance payable by him in accordance with the maintenance assessment.
- (7) This section shall not prevent a court from exercising any power which it has to make a maintenance order in relation to a child if—
- (a) the child is, will be or (if the order were to be made) would be receiving instruction at an educational establishment or undergoing training for a trade, profession or vocation (whether or not while in gainful employment); and
 - (b) the order is made solely for the purposes of requiring the person making or securing the making of periodical payments fixed by the order to meet some or all of the expenses incurred in connection with the provision of the instruction or training.
- (8) This section shall not prevent a court from exercising any power which it has to make a maintenance order in relation to a child if—
- (a) a disability living allowance is paid to or in respect of him; or
 - (b) no such allowance is paid but he is disabled,
- and the order is made solely for the purpose of requiring the person making or securing the making of periodical payments fixed by the order to meet some or all of any expenses attributable to the child's disability.
- (9) For the purposes of subsection (8), a child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury, mental disorder or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed.
- (10) This section shall not prevent a court from exercising any power which it has to make a maintenance order in relation to a child if the order is made against a person with care of the child.
- (11) In this Act "maintenance order", in relation to any child, means an order which requires the making or securing of periodical payments to or for the benefit of the child and which is made under—
- (a) Part II of the ^{M2}Matrimonial Causes Act 1973;
 - (b) the ^{M3}Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts Act 1978;
 - (c) Part III of the ^{M4}Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984;
 - (d) the ^{M5}Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985;
 - (e) Schedule 1 to the ^{M6}Children Act 1989; or
 - (f) any other prescribed enactment,

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and includes any order varying or reviving such an order.

Textual Amendments

- F9** Words in s. 8(1)(2) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 22](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F10** S. 8(3A) inserted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 18\(3\), 30\(4\)](#); [S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C6** S. 8 restricted (5.4.1993) by [The Child Maintenance \(Written Agreements\) Order 1993 \(S.I. 1993/620\), art.2](#)
- C7** S. 8 amended (5.4.1993) by [The Child Support \(Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements\) Regulations 1993 \(S.I. 1993/584\), reg. 2\(2\), Sch.2](#)
- C8** S. 8 restricted (2.1.1998) by [The Child Support \(Written Agreements\) \(Scotland\) Order 1997 \(S.I. 1997/2943\), arts. 1, 2](#)
- C9** S. 8(3) modified (31.3.1993) by [The Child Support Act 1991 \(Commencement No.3 and Transitional Provisions\) Order 1992 \(S.I. 1992/2644\), Sch. Pt. I para. 5\(1\)](#) (as substituted (31.3.1993) by [S.I. 1993/966, art. 2\(1\)](#))
- C10** S. 8(3) excluded (31.3.1993) by [The Child Support Act 1991 \(Commencement No.3 and Transitional Provisions\) Order 1992 \(S.I. 1992/2644\), Sch. Pt. I para. 5\(2\)](#) (as substituted (31.3.1993) by [S.I. 1993/966, art. 2\(1\)](#))
- C11** S. 8(3) restricted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 18\(9\), 30\(4\)](#); [S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#)

Commencement Information

- I5** S. 8 wholly in force; s. 8 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 8(5)(9)(11)(f) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.](#); s. 8 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2](#)

Marginal Citations

- M2** 1973 c. 18.
- M3** 1978 c. 22.
- M4** 1984 c. 42.
- M5** 1985 c. 37.
- M6** 1989 c. 41.

9 Agreements about maintenance.

- (1) In this section “maintenance agreement” means any agreement for the making, or for securing the making, of periodical payments by way of maintenance, or in Scotland aliment, to or for the benefit of any child.
- (2) Nothing in this Act shall be taken to prevent any person from entering into a maintenance agreement.
- (3) ^{F11}Subject to section 4(10)(a) and section 7(10),] the existence of a maintenance agreement shall not prevent any party to the agreement, or any other person, from applying for a maintenance assessment with respect to any child to or for whose benefit periodical payments are to be made or secured under the agreement.

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- (4) Where any agreement contains a provision which purports to restrict the right of any person to apply for a maintenance assessment, that provision shall be void.
- (5) Where section 8 would prevent any court from making a maintenance order in relation to a child and an absent parent of his, no court shall exercise any power that it has to vary any agreement so as—
- (a) to insert a provision requiring that absent parent to make or secure the making of periodical payments by way of maintenance, or in Scotland aliment, to or for the benefit of that child; or
 - (b) to increase the amount payable under such a provision.
- [^{F12}(6) In any case in which section 4(10) or 7(10) prevents the making of an application for a maintenance assessment, and—
- (a) no application has been made for a maintenance assessment under section 6, or
 - (b) such an application has been made but no maintenance assessment has been made in response to it,
- subsection (5) shall have effect with the omission of paragraph (b).]

Textual Amendments

- F11** Words in s. 9(3) inserted (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), ss. 18(4), 30(4); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F12** S. 9(6) inserted (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), ss. 18(4), 30(4); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C12** S. 9 amended (5.4.1993) by The Child Support (Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements) Regulations 1993 (S.I. 1993/584), reg. 2(2), Sch. 2
- C13** S. 9(3) excluded (31.3.1993) by The Child Support Act 1991 (Commencement No.3 and Transitional Provisions) Order 1992 (S.I. 1992/2644), Sch. Pt. 1 para. 5(1) (as substituted (31.3.1993) by S.I. 1993/966, art. 2(1))
- C14** S. 9(5) modified (31.3.1993) by The Child Support Act 1991 (Commencement No.3 and Transitional Provisions) Order 1992 (S.I. 1992/2644), Sch. Pt. 1 para. 5(1) (as substituted (31.3.1993) by S.I. 1993/966, art. 2(1))
- C15** S. 9(5)(b) excluded (31.3.1993) by The Child Support Act 1991 (Commencement No.3 and Transitional Provisions) Order 1992 (S.I. 1992/2644), Sch. Pt. 1 para. 5(2) (as substituted (31.3.1993) by S.I. 1993/966, art. 2(1))
- C16** S. 9(5)(b) restricted (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), ss. 18(9), 30(4); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

10 Relationship between maintenance assessments and certain court orders and related matters.

- (1) Where an order of a kind prescribed for the purposes of this subsection is in force with respect to any qualifying child with respect to whom a maintenance assessment is made, the order—
- (a) shall, so far as it relates to the making or securing of periodical payments, cease to have effect to such extent as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State; or

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- (b) where the regulations so provide, shall, so far as it so relates, have effect subject to such modifications as may be so determined.
- (2) Where an agreement of a kind prescribed for the purposes of this subsection is in force with respect to any qualifying child with respect to whom a maintenance assessment is made, the agreement—
- (a) shall, so far as it relates to the making or securing of periodical payments, be unenforceable to such extent as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State; or
- (b) where the regulations so provide, shall, so far as it so relates, have effect subject to such modifications as may be so determined.
- (3) Any regulations under this section may, in particular, make such provision with respect to—
- (a) any case where any person with respect to whom an order or agreement of a kind prescribed for the purposes of subsection (1) or (2) has effect applies to the prescribed court, before the end of the prescribed period, for the order or agreement to be varied in the light of the maintenance assessment and of the provisions of this Act;
- (b) the recovery of any arrears under the order or agreement which fell due before the coming into force of the maintenance assessment,
- as the Secretary of State considers appropriate and may provide that, in prescribed circumstances, an application to any court which is made with respect to an order of a prescribed kind relating to the making or securing of periodical payments to or for the benefit of a child shall be treated by the court as an application for the order to be revoked.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for—
- (a) notification to be given by [^{F13}the Secretary of State] to the prescribed person in any case where [^{F14}he] considers that the making of a maintenance assessment has affected, or is likely to affect, any order of a kind prescribed for the purposes of this subsection;
- (b) notification to be given by the prescribed person to the Secretary of State in any case where a court makes an order which it considers has affected, or is likely to affect, a maintenance assessment.
- (5) Rules may be made under section 144 of the ^{M7}Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (rules of procedure) requiring any person who, in prescribed circumstances, makes an application to a magistrates' court for a maintenance order to furnish the court with a statement in a prescribed form, and signed by [^{F15}an officer of the Secretary of State], as to whether or not, at the time when the statement is made, there is a maintenance assessment in force with respect to that person or the child concerned.

In this subsection—

“maintenance order” means an order of a prescribed kind for the making or securing of periodical payments to or for the benefit of a child; and

“prescribed” means prescribed by the rules.

Textual Amendments

F13 Words in s. 10(4) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 23\(1\)\(a\)](#); S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

F14 Word in s. 10(4) substituted (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), **Sch. 7 para. 23(1)(b)**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

F15 Words in s. 10(5) substituted (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), **Sch. 7 para. 23(2)**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C17 S. 10 amended (5.4.1993) by The Child Support (Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements) Regulations 1993 (S.I. 1993/584), reg. 2(2), **Sch.2**

Marginal Citations

M7 1980 c. 43.

Maintenance assessments

11 Maintenance assessments.

(1) Any application for a maintenance assessment made to the Secretary of State shall be [^{F16}dealt with by him] in accordance with the provision made by or under this Act.

[^{F17}(1A) Where—

- (a) an application for a maintenance assessment is made under section 6, but
- (b) the Secretary of State becomes aware, [^{F18}before determining the application], that the claim mentioned in subsection (1) of that section has been disallowed or withdrawn,

he shall, subject to subsection (1B), treat the application as if it had not been made.

(1B) If it appears to the Secretary of State that subsection (10) of section 4 would not have prevented the parent with care concerned from making an application for a maintenance assessment under that section he shall—

- (a) notify her of the effect of this subsection, and
- (b) if, before the end of the period of 28 days beginning with the day on which notice was sent to her, she asks him to do so, treat the application as having been made not under section 6 but under section 4.

(1C) Where the application is not preserved under subsection (1B) (and so is treated as not having been made) the Secretary of State shall notify—

- (a) the parent with care concerned; and
- (b) the absent parent (or alleged absent parent), where it appears to him that that person is aware of the application.]

(2) The amount of child support maintenance to be fixed by any maintenance assessment shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Part I of Schedule 1.

(3) Part II of Schedule 1 makes further provision with respect to maintenance assessments.

Textual Amendments

F16 Words in s. 11(1) substituted (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), **Sch. 7 para. 24(1)**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

F17 S. 11(1A)-(1C) inserted (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), **ss. 19, 30(4)**; S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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F18 Words in s. 11(1A) substituted (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), Sch. 7 para. 24(2); S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

Commencement Information

I6 S. 11 wholly in force; s. 11 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 11 in force in respect of specified provisions of Sch. 1 at 17.6.1992 by S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.; s. 11 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2

[^{F19}12 Default and interim maintenance decisions.

- (1) Where the Secretary of State—
 - (a) is required to make a maintenance calculation; or
 - (b) is proposing to make a decision under section 16 or 17,
 and it appears to him that he does not have sufficient information to enable him to do so, he may make a default maintenance decision.
- (2) Where an application for a variation has been made under section 28A(1) in connection with an application for a maintenance calculation (or in connection with such an application which is treated as having been made), the Secretary of State may make an interim maintenance decision.
- (3) The amount of child support maintenance fixed by an interim maintenance decision shall be determined in accordance with Part I of Schedule 1.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision as to default and interim maintenance decisions.
- (5) The regulations may, in particular, make provision as to—
 - (a) the procedure to be followed in making a default or an interim maintenance decision; and
 - (b) a default rate of child support maintenance to apply where a default maintenance decision is made.]

Textual Amendments

F19 S. 12 substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 (c. 19), ss. 4, 86(1)(a)(2) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Child support officers

[^{F20}13 Child support officers.

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Textual Amendments

F20 S. 13 repealed (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), Sch. 7 para. 26, Sch. 8; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(f)(iii)(g)(iii) (and see Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 1(c))

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Information

14 Information required by Secretary of State.

- (1) The Secretary of State may make regulations requiring any information or evidence needed for the determination of any application under this Act, or any question arising in connection with such an application, or needed in connection with the collection or enforcement of child support or other maintenance under this Act, to be furnished—
 - (a) by such persons as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State; and
 - (b) in accordance with the regulations.

[^{F21}(1A) Regulations under subsection (1) may make provision for notifying any person who is required to furnish any information or evidence under the regulations of the possible consequences of failing to do so.]

^{F22}(2)

^{F22}(2A)

- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision authorising the disclosure by him ^{F23}... , in such circumstances as may be prescribed, of such information held by [^{F24}him] for purposes of this Act as may be prescribed.
- (4) The provisions of Schedule 2 (which relate to information which is held for purposes other than those of this Act but which is required by the Secretary of State) shall have effect.

Textual Amendments

- F21** S. 14(1A) inserted (1.10.1995 for specified purposes, 14.10.1996 in so far as not already in force) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), s. 30(4), **Sch. 3 para. 3(1)**; S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 2; S.I. 1996/2630, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F22** S. 14(2)(2A) repealed (8.9.1998) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), Sch. 7 para. 27(a), **Sch. 8**; S.I. 1998/2209, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F23** Words in s. 14(3) repealed (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), Sch. 7 para. 27(b), **Sch. 8**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(f)(iii)(g)(iii)
- F24** Word in s. 14(3) substituted (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), **Sch. 7 para. 27(b)**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

Commencement Information

- I7** S. 14 wholly in force; s. 14 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 14(1)(3) wholly in force and s. 14(4) in force so far as it relates to Sch. 2 para. 2(4) at 17.6.1992 by S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, **Sch.**; s. 14 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, **art. 2**

15 Powers of inspectors.

- (1) Where, in a particular case, the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to do so for the purpose of acquiring information which he ^{F25}... requires for purposes of this Act, he may appoint a person to act as an inspector under this section.
- (2) Every inspector shall be furnished with a certificate of his appointment.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (3) Without prejudice to his being appointed to act in relation to any other case, or being appointed to act for a further period in relation to the case in question, an inspector's appointment shall cease at the end of such period as may be specified.
- (4) An inspector shall have power—
- (a) to enter at all reasonable times—
 - (i) any specified premises, other than premises used solely as a dwelling-house; and
 - (ii) any premises which are not specified but which are used by any specified person for the purpose of carrying on any trade, profession, vocation or business; and
 - (b) to make such examination and enquiry there as he considers appropriate.
- (5) An inspector exercising his powers may question any person aged 18 or over whom he finds on the premises.
- (6) If required to do so by an inspector exercising his powers, any person who is or has been—
- (a) an occupier of the premises in question;
 - (b) an employer or an employee working at or from those premises;
 - (c) carrying on at or from those premises any trade, profession, vocation or business;
 - (d) an employee or agent of any person mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c),
- shall furnish to the inspector all such information and documents as the inspector may reasonably require.
- (7) No person shall be required under this section to answer any question or to give any evidence tending to incriminate himself or, in the case of a person who is married, his or her spouse.
- (8) On applying for admission to any premises in the exercise of his powers, an inspector shall, if so required, produce his certificate.
- (9) If any person—
- (a) intentionally delays or obstructs any inspector exercising his powers; or
 - (b) without reasonable excuse, refuses or neglects to answer any question or furnish any information or to produce any document when required to do so under this section,
- he shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.
- (10) In this section—
- “certificate” means a certificate of appointment issued under this section;
 - “inspector” means an inspector appointed under this section;
 - “powers” means powers conferred by this section; and
 - “specified” means specified in the certificate in question.

Textual Amendments

- F25** Words in s. 15(1) repealed (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), s. 87(2), [Sch. 7 para. 28](#), [Sch. 8](#); [S.I. 1999/1510](#), art. 2(f)(iii)(g)(iii)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C18 S. 15 amended (5.4.1993) by [The Child Support \(Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements\) Regulations 1993 \(S.I. 1993/584\)](#), reg. 2(2), [Sch. 2](#)

Reviews and appeals

[^{F26}16 Revision of decisions

- (1) Any decision of the Secretary of State under section 11, 12 or 17 may be revised by the Secretary of State—
 - (a) either within the prescribed period or in prescribed cases or circumstances; and
 - (b) either on an application made for the purpose or on his own initiative;
 and regulations may prescribe the procedure by which a decision of the Secretary of State may be so revised.
- (2) In making a decision under subsection (1), the Secretary of State need not consider any issue that is not raised by the application or, as the case may be, did not cause him to act on his own initiative.
- (3) Subject to subsections (4) and (5) and section 28ZC, a revision under this section shall take effect as from the date on which the original decision took (or was to take) effect.
- (4) Regulations may provide that, in prescribed cases or circumstances, a revision under this section shall take effect as from such other date as may be prescribed.
- (5) Where a decision is revised under this section, for the purpose of any rule as to the time allowed for bringing an appeal, the decision shall be regarded as made on the date on which it is so revised.
- (6) Except in prescribed circumstances, an appeal against a decision of the Secretary of State shall lapse if the decision is revised under this section before the appeal is determined.]

Textual Amendments

F26 S. 16 substituted (16.11.1998 for specified purposes, 7.12.1998 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), [ss. 40, 87\(2\)](#); [S.I. 1998/2780](#), [art. 2](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (as amended (2.4.2001) by 2000 c. 19, [Sch. 9 Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2001/1252](#), [art. 2\(1\)\(d\)\(iii\)](#))

[^{F27}17 Decisions superseding earlier decisions

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), the following, namely—
 - (a) any decision of the Secretary of State under section 11 or 12 or this section, whether as originally made or as revised under section 16;
 - (b) any decision of an appeal tribunal under section 20; and
 - [^{F28}(c) any reduced benefit decision under section 46;
 - (d) any decision of an appeal tribunal on a referral under section 28D(1)(b);
 - (e) any decision of a Child Support Commissioner on an appeal from such a decision as is mentioned in paragraph (b) or (d)],

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may be superseded by a decision made by the Secretary of State, either on an application made for the purpose or on his own initiative.

- (2) In making a decision under subsection (1), the Secretary of State need not consider any issue that is not raised by the application or, as the case may be, did not cause him to act on his own initiative.
- (3) Regulations may prescribe the cases and circumstances in which, and the procedure by which, a decision may be made under this section.
- [^{F29}(4) Subject to subsection (5) and section 28ZC, a decision under this section shall take effect as from the beginning of the maintenance period in which it is made or, where applicable, the beginning of the maintenance period in which the application was made.
- (4A) In subsection (4), a “maintenance period” is (except where a different meaning is prescribed for prescribed cases) a period of seven days, the first one beginning on the effective date of the first decision made by the Secretary of State under section 11 or (if earlier) his first default or interim maintenance decision (under section 12) in relation to the non-resident parent in question, and each subsequent one beginning on the day after the last day of the previous one.]
- (5) Regulations may provide that, in prescribed cases or circumstances, a decision under this section shall take effect as from such other date as may be prescribed.]

Textual Amendments

F27 S. 17 substituted for ss. 17–19 (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), **ss. 41**, 87(2); S.I. 1999/528, art. 2(a), Sch.; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(d) (for a transitional provision see S.I. 1999/1510, art. 48(2))

F28 S. 17(1)(c)-(e) substituted for s. 17(1)(c) (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 9(2)**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; S.I. 2003/192, art. 3, Sch.

F29 S. 17(4)(4A) substituted for s. 17(4) (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 9(3)**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; S.I. 2003/192, art. 3, Sch.

^{F27}**18** **Reviews of decisions of child support officers.**

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Textual Amendments

F27 S. 17 substituted for ss. 17–19 (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), **ss. 41**, 87(2); S.I. 1999/528, art. 2(a), Sch.; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(d) (for a transitional provision see S.I. 1999/1510, art. 48(2))

^{F27}**19** **Reviews at instigation of child support officers.**

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Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Textual Amendments

F27 S. 17 substituted for ss. 17–19 (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), **ss. 41, 87(2)**; [S.I. 1999/528, art. 2\(a\), Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(d\)](#) (for a transitional provision see [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 48\(2\)](#))

[^{F30}20 Appeals to appeal tribunals.

- (1) A qualifying person has a right of appeal to an appeal tribunal against—
 - (a) a decision of the Secretary of State under section 11, 12 or 17 (whether as originally made or as revised under section 16);
 - (b) a decision of the Secretary of State not to make a maintenance calculation under section 11 or not to supersede a decision under section 17;
 - (c) a reduced benefit decision under section 46;
 - (d) the imposition (by virtue of section 41A) of a requirement to make penalty payments, or their amount;
 - (e) the imposition (by virtue of section 47) of a requirement to pay fees.
- (2) In subsection (1), “qualifying person” means—
 - (a) in relation to paragraphs (a) and (b)—
 - (i) the person with care, or non-resident parent, with respect to whom the Secretary of State made the decision, or
 - (ii) in a case relating to a maintenance calculation which was applied for under section 7, either of those persons or the child concerned;
 - (b) in relation to paragraph (c), the person in respect of whom the benefits are payable;
 - (c) in relation to paragraph (d), the parent who has been required to make penalty payments; and
 - (d) in relation to paragraph (e), the person required to pay fees.
- (3) A person with a right of appeal under this section shall be given such notice as may be prescribed of—
 - (a) that right; and
 - (b) the relevant decision, or the imposition of the requirement.
- (4) Regulations may make—
 - (a) provision as to the manner in which, and the time within which, appeals are to be brought; and
 - (b) such provision with respect to proceedings before appeal tribunals as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.
- (5) The regulations may in particular make any provision of a kind mentioned in Schedule 5 to the Social Security Act 1998.
- (6) No appeal lies by virtue of subsection (1)(c) unless the amount of the person’s benefit is reduced in accordance with the reduced benefit decision; and the time within which such an appeal may be brought runs from the date of notification of the reduction.
- (7) In deciding an appeal under this section, an appeal tribunal—
 - (a) need not consider any issue that is not raised by the appeal; and

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- (b) shall not take into account any circumstances not obtaining at the time when the Secretary of State made the decision or imposed the requirement.
- (8) If an appeal under this section is allowed, the appeal tribunal may—
 - (a) itself make such decision as it considers appropriate; or
 - (b) remit the case to the Secretary of State, together with such directions (if any) as it considers appropriate.]

Textual Amendments

F30 S. 20 substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 10**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with [ss. 28](#), 83(6)); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch. Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2003/192](#), [art. 3](#), [Sch.](#)

F31 20A Lapse of appeals.

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Textual Amendments

F31 S. 20 substituted for [ss. 20–21 \(4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force\)](#) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), **ss. 42**, 87(2); [S.I. 1999/528](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#), [Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510](#), [art. 2\(d\)](#)

F31 21 Child support appeal tribunals.

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Textual Amendments

F31 S. 20 substituted for [ss. 20–21 \(4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force\)](#) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), **ss. 42**, 87(2); [S.I. 1999/528](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#), [Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510](#), [art. 2\(d\)](#)

22 Child Support Commissioners.

- (1) Her Majesty may from time to time appoint a Chief Child Support Commissioner and such number of other Child Support Commissioners as she may think fit.
- (2) The Chief Child Support Commissioner and the other Child Support Commissioners shall be appointed from among persons who—
 - (a) have a 10 year general qualification; or
 - (b) are advocates or solicitors in Scotland of 10 years' standing.
- (3) The Lord Chancellor, after consulting the Lord Advocate, may make such regulations with respect to proceedings before Child Support Commissioners as he considers appropriate.
- (4) The regulations—

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (a) may, in particular, make any provision of a kind mentioned in [F32Schedule 5 to the Social Security Act 1998]; and
- (b) shall provide that any hearing before a Child Support Commissioner shall be in public except in so far as the Commissioner for special reasons directs otherwise.

(5) Schedule 4 shall have effect with respect to Child Support Commissioners.

Textual Amendments

F32 Words in s. 22(4)(a) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 29; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C19 S. 22: transfer of functions (19.5.1999) by [The Transfer of Functions \(Lord Advocate and Secretary of State\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/678\), arts. 1, 2\(1\), Sch.](#)

C20 S. 22(3) functions treated as exercisable in Scotland (30.6.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Functions Exercisable in or as Regards Scotland\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1748\), arts. 1, 3, Sch. 1 para. 12](#)

C21 S. 22(3): transfer of functions in relation to Scotland (1.7.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Transfer of Functions to the Scottish Ministers etc.\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1750\), arts. 1\(1\), 2, Sch. 1 \(with art. 7\)](#)

Commencement Information

I8 S. 22 wholly in force; s. 22 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 22(3)(4) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.](#); s. 22(1)(2)(5) in force at 1.9.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1938, art. 2](#); s. 22 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2](#)

23 Child Support Commissioners for Northern Ireland.

- (1) Her Majesty may from time to time appoint a Chief Child Support Commissioner for Northern Ireland and such number of other Child Support Commissioners for Northern Ireland as she may think fit.
- (2) The Chief Child Support Commissioner for Northern Ireland and the other Child Support Commissioners for Northern Ireland shall be appointed from among persons who are barristers or solicitors of not less than 10 years' standing.
- (3) Schedule 4 shall have effect with respect to Child Support Commissioners for Northern Ireland, subject to the modifications set out in paragraph 8.

F33(4)

F33(5)

Textual Amendments

F33 S. 23(4)(5) repealed (2.12.1999) by [Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(c. 47\), ss. 100\(2\), 101\(3\), Sch. 15 \(with s. 95, Sch. 14\); S.I. 1999/3209, art. 2, Sch.](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C22 S. 23 applied (18.6.1992) by [S.I. 1991/2628, art. 2; S.R. 1992/278, art.2, Sch.](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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24 Appeal to Child Support Commissioner.

- (1) Any person who is aggrieved by a decision of [^{F34}an appeal tribunal, and the Secretary of State], may appeal to a Child Support Commissioner on a question of law.
- ^{F35}(1A)
- (2) Where, on an appeal under this section, a Child Support Commissioner holds that the decision appealed against was wrong in law he shall set it aside.
- (3) Where a decision is set aside under subsection (2), the Child Support Commissioner may—
 - (a) if he can do so without making fresh or further findings of fact, give the decision which he considers should have been given by [^{F36}the appeal tribunal];
 - (b) if he considers it expedient, make such findings and give such decision as he considers appropriate in the light of those findings; or
 - [^{F37}(c) on an appeal by the Secretary of State, refer the case to [^{F38}an appeal tribunal] with directions for its determination; or
 - (d) on any other appeal, refer the case to [^{F39}the Secretary of State] or, if he considers it appropriate, to [^{F38}an appeal tribunal] with directions for its determination.]
- [^{F40}(4) The reference under subsection (3) to the Secretary of State shall, subject to any direction of the Child Support Commissioner, be to an officer of his, or a person providing him with services, who has taken no part in the decision originally appealed against.]
- (5) On a reference under subsection (3) to [^{F41}an appeal tribunal], the tribunal shall, subject to any direction of the Child Support Commissioner, consist of persons who were not members of the tribunal which gave the decision which has been appealed against.
- (6) No appeal lies under this section without the leave—
 - (a) of the person [^{F42}who constituted, or was the chairman of, the appeal tribunal] when the decision appealed against was given or of [^{F43}such other person] as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Lord Chancellor; or
 - (b) subject to and in accordance with regulations so made, of a Child Support Commissioner.
- (7) The Lord Chancellor may by regulations make provision as to the manner in which, and the time within which, appeals under this section are to be brought and applications for leave under this section are to be made.
- (8) Where a question which would otherwise fall to be determined by [^{F44}the Secretary of State] first arises in the course of an appeal to a Child Support Commissioner, he may, if he thinks fit, determine it even though it has not been considered by [^{F44}the Secretary of State].
- (9) Before making any regulations under subsection (6) or (7), the Lord Chancellor shall consult the Lord Advocate.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Textual Amendments

- F34** Words in s. 24(1) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(1\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F35** S. 24(1A) repealed (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(2\), Sch. 8; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(f\)\(iii\)\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F36** Words in s. 24(3) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(3\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F37** S. 24(3)(c)(d) substituted for s. 24(3)(c) (2.12.1996) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), s. 30\(4\), Sch. 3 para. 7\(3\)](#); [S.I. 1996/2630, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 2](#)
- F38** Words in s. 24(3) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(3\)\(b\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F39** Words in s. 24(3) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(3\)\(c\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F40** S. 24(4) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(4\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F41** Words in s. 24(5) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(5\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F42** Words in s. 24(6) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(6\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F43** Words in s. 24(6) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(6\)\(b\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F44** Words in s. 24(8) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 30\(7\)](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C23** S. 24: transfer of functions (19.5.1999) by [The Transfer of Functions \(Lord Advocate and Secretary of State\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/678\), arts. 1, 2\(1\), Sch.](#)
- C24** S. 24(9) functions treated as exercisable in Scotland (30.6.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Functions Exercisable in or as Regards Scotland\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1748\), arts. 1, 3, Sch. 1 para. 12](#)
- C25** S. 24(9): transfer of functions in relation to Scotland (1.7.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Transfer of Functions to the Scottish Ministers etc.\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1750\), arts. 1\(1\), 2, Sch. 1 \(with art. 7\)](#)

Commencement Information

- I9** S. 24 wholly in force; s. 24 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 24(6)(7) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.](#); s. 24(9) in force at 1.9.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1938, art. 2](#); s. 24 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2](#)

25 Appeal from Child Support Commissioner on question of law.

- (1) An appeal on a question of law shall lie to the appropriate court from any decision of a Child Support Commissioner.
- (2) No such appeal may be brought except—
 - (a) with leave of the Child Support Commissioner who gave the decision or, where regulations made by the Lord Chancellor so provide, of a Child Support Commissioner selected in accordance with the regulations; or
 - (b) if the Child Support Commissioner refuses leave, with the leave of the appropriate court.
- (3) An application for leave to appeal under this section against a decision of a Child Support Commissioner (“the appeal decision”) may only be made by—

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- (a) a person who was a party to the proceedings in which the original decision, or appeal decision, was given;
 - (b) the Secretary of State; or
 - (c) any other person who is authorised to do so by regulations made by the Lord Chancellor.
- [^{F45}(3A) The Child Support Commissioner to whom an application for leave to appeal under this section is made shall specify as the appropriate court either the Court of Appeal or the Court of Session.
- (3B) In determining the appropriate court, the Child Support Commissioner shall have regard to the circumstances of the case, and in particular the convenience of the persons who may be parties to the appeal.]
- (4) In this section—
“appropriate court”[^{F46}, except in subsections (3A) and (3B), means the court specified in accordance with those subsections]; and
“original decision” means the decision to which the appeal decision in question relates.
- (5) The Lord Chancellor may by regulations make provision with respect to—
(a) the manner in which and the time within which applications must be made to a Child Support Commissioner for leave under this section; and
(b) the procedure for dealing with such applications.
- (6) Before making any regulations under subsection (2), (3) or (5), the Lord Chancellor shall consult the Lord Advocate.

Textual Amendments

- F45** S. 25(3A)(3B) inserted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), s. 30(4), [Sch. 3 para. 8\(1\)](#); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, [Sch. Pt. 1](#)
- F46** Words in s. 25(4) substituted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), s. 30(4), [Sch. 3 para. 8\(2\)](#); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, [Sch. Pt. 1](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C26** S. 25: transfer of functions (19.5.1999) by [The Transfer of Functions \(Lord Advocate and Secretary of State\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/678\)](#), arts. 1, 2(1), [Sch.](#)
- C27** S. 25(6) functions treated as exercisable in Scotland (30.6.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Functions Exercisable in or as Regards Scotland\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1748\)](#), arts. 1, 3, [Sch. 1 para. 12](#)
- C28** S. 25(6): transfer of functions in relation to Scotland (1.7.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Transfer of Functions to the Scottish Ministers etc.\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1750\)](#), arts. 1(1), 2, [Sch. 1](#) (with art. 7)

Commencement Information

- I10** S. 25 wholly in force; s. 25 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 25(2)(a)(3)(c)(5)(6) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), art. 2, [Sch.](#); s. 25 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644](#), art. 2

26 Disputes about parentage.

- (1) Where a person who is alleged to be a parent of the child with respect to whom an application for a maintenance assessment has been made (“the alleged parent”)

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denies that he is one of the child's parents, [^{F47}the Secretary of State] shall not make a maintenance assessment on the assumption that the alleged parent is one of the child's parents unless the case falls within one of those set out in subsection (2).

(2) The Cases are —

CASE A

Where the alleged parent is a parent of the child in question by virtue of having adopted him.

CASE B

Where the alleged parent is a parent of the child in question by virtue of an order under section 30 of the ^{M8}Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (parental orders in favour of gamete donors).

CASE C

Where—

(a) either—

(i) a declaration that the alleged parent is a parent of the child in question (or a declaration which has that effect) is in force under section 56 of the ^{M9}Family Law Act 1986 [^{F48}or Article 32 of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings (Northern Ireland) Order 1989] (declarations of parentage); or

(ii) a declarator by a court in Scotland that the alleged parent is a parent of the child in question (or a declarator which has that effect) is in force; and

(b) the child has not subsequently been adopted.

CASE D

Where—

(a) a declaration to the effect that the alleged parent is one of the parents of the child in question has been made under section 27; and

(b) the child has not subsequently been adopted.

CASE E

Where—

(a) the child is habitually resident in Scotland;

(b) [^{F49}the Secretary of State] is satisfied that one or other of the presumptions set out in section 5(1) of the ^{M10}Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986 applies; and

(c) the child has not subsequently been adopted.

CASE F

Where—

(a) the alleged parent has been found, or adjudged, to be the father of the child in question—

(i) in proceedings before any court in England and Wales which are relevant proceedings for the purposes of section 12 of the ^{M11}Civil Evidence Act 1968 [^{F50}or in proceedings before any court in Northern Ireland which are relevant proceedings for the purposes of section 8 of the Civil Evidence Act (Northern Ireland) 1971]; or

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- (ii) in affiliation proceedings before any court in the United Kingdom,
(whether or not he offered any defence to the allegation of paternity) and that finding or adjudication still subsists; and
- (b) the child has not subsequently been adopted.
- (3) In this section—
- “adopted” means adopted within the meaning of Part IV of the^{M12} Adoption Act 1976 or, in relation to Scotland, Part IV of the^{M13} Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978; and
- “affiliation proceedings”, in relation to Scotland, means any action of affiliation and aliment.

Textual Amendments

- F47** Words in s. 26(1) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 31\(1\)](#); S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)
- F48** Words in s. 26(2) inserted (4.11.1996) by [The Children \(Northern Ireland Consequential Amendments\) Order 1995 \(S.I. 1995/756\), arts. 1\(2\), 13\(a\)](#) (with art. 16); S.R. 1996/297, art. 3
- F49** Words in s. 26(2) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 31\(2\)](#); S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)
- F50** Words in s. 26(2) inserted (4.11.1996) by [The Children \(Northern Ireland Consequential Amendments\) Order 1995 \(S.I. 1995/756\), arts. 1\(2\), 13\(b\)](#) (with art. 16); S.R. 1996/297, art. 3

Marginal Citations

- M8** 1990 c. 37.
- M9** 1986 c. 55.
- M10** 1986 c. 9.
- M11** 1968 c. 64.
- M12** 1976 c. 36.
- M13** 1978 c. 28.

27 Reference to court for declaration of parentage.

- [^{F51}(1) Subsection (1A) applies in any case where—
- (a) an application for a maintenance assessment has been made, or a maintenance assessment is in force, with respect to a person (“the alleged parent”) who denies that he is a parent of a child with respect to whom the application or assessment was made; and
- (b) [^{F52}the Secretary of State] is not satisfied that the case falls within one of those set out in section 26(2).
- (1A) In any case where this subsection applies, the Secretary of State or the person with care may apply to the court for a declaration as to whether or not the alleged parent is one of the child’s parents.]
- (2) If, on hearing any application under subsection [^{F53}(1A)], the court is satisfied that the alleged parent is, or is not, a parent of the child in question it shall make a declaration to that effect.
- [^{F54}(3) A declaration under this section shall have effect only for the purposes of—
- (a) this Act; and

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- (b) proceedings in which a court is considering whether to make a maintenance order in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (6), (7) or (8) of section 8.]
- (4) In this section “court” means, subject to any provision made under Schedule 11 to the ^{M14}Children Act 1989 (jurisdiction of courts with respect to certain proceedings relating to children) the High Court, a county court or a magistrates’ court.
- (5) In the definition of “relevant proceedings” in section 12(5) of the Civil Evidence Act 1968 (findings of paternity etc. as evidence in civil proceedings) the following paragraph shall be added at the end—
“(d) section 27 of the Child Support Act 1991.”
- (6) This section does not apply to Scotland.

Textual Amendments

- F51** S. 27(1)(1A) substituted for s. 27(1) (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 20\(2\), 30\(4\); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#)
- F52** Words in s. 27(1) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 32; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)
- F53** Word in s. 27(2) substituted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 20\(3\), 30\(4\); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#)
- F54** S. 27(3) substituted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 20\(4\), 30\(4\); S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#)

Marginal Citations

- M14** 1989 c. 41.

[^{F55}27A Recovery of fees for scientific tests.

- (1) This section applies in any case where—
- an application for a maintenance assessment has been made or a maintenance assessment is in force;
 - scientific tests have been carried out (otherwise than under a direction or in response to a request) in relation to bodily samples obtained from a person who is alleged to be a parent of a child with respect to whom the application or assessment is made;
 - the results of the tests do not exclude the alleged parent from being one of the child’s parents; and
 - one of the conditions set out in subsection (2) is satisfied.
- (2) The conditions are that—
- the alleged parent does not deny that he is one of the child’s parents;
 - in proceedings under section 27, a court has made a declaration that the alleged parent is a parent of the child in question; or
 - in an action under section 7 of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986, brought by the Secretary of State by virtue of section 28, a court has granted a decree of declarator of parentage to the effect that the alleged parent is a parent of the child in question.

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- (3) In any case to which this section applies, any fee paid by the Secretary of State in connection with scientific tests may be recovered by him from the alleged parent as a debt due to the Crown.
- (4) In this section—
- “bodily sample” means a sample of bodily fluid or bodily tissue taken for the purpose of scientific tests;
 - “direction” means a direction given by a court under section 20 of the Family Law Reform Act 1969 (tests to determine paternity);
 - “request” means a request made by a court under section 70 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 (blood and other samples in civil proceedings); and
 - “scientific tests” means scientific tests made with the object of ascertaining the inheritable characteristics of bodily fluids or bodily tissue.
- (5) Any sum recovered by the Secretary of State under this section shall be paid by him into the Consolidated Fund.]

Textual Amendments

F55 S. 27A inserted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), **ss. 21, 30(4)**; S.I. 1995/2302, **art. 2**, Sch. Pt. 1

28 Power of Secretary of State to initiate or defend actions of declarator: Scotland.

- [^{F56}(1) Subsection (1A) applies in any case where—
- (a) an application for a maintenance assessment has been made, or a maintenance assessment is in force, with respect to a person (“the alleged parent”) who denies that he is a parent of a child with respect to whom the application or assessment was made; and
 - (b) [^{F57}the Secretary of State] is not satisfied that the case falls within one of those set out in section 26(2).
- (1A) In any case where this subsection applies, the Secretary of State may bring an action for declarator of parentage under section 7 of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986.]
- (2) The Secretary of State may defend an action for declarator of non-parentage or illegitimacy brought by a person named as the alleged parent in an application for a maintenance assessment [^{F58}or in a maintenance assessment which is in force].
- (3) This section applies to Scotland only.

Textual Amendments

- F56** S. 28(1)(1A) substituted for s. 28(1) (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), **ss. 20(6), 30(4)**; S.I. 1995/2302, **art. 2**, Sch. Pt. 1
- F57** Words in s. 28(1) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), s. 87(2), **Sch. 7 para. 33**; S.I. 1999/1510, **art. 2(g)(iii)**
- F58** Words in s. 28(2) inserted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), **ss. 20(7), 30(4)**; S.I. 1995/2302, **art. 2**, Sch. Pt. 1

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F⁵⁹ Decisions and appeals dependent on other cases

Textual Amendments

- F59** Ss. 28ZA, 28ZB and cross-heading inserted (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), [ss. 43, 87\(2\)](#); [S.I. 1999/528](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#), [Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510](#), [art. 2\(d\)](#)

28ZA Decisions involving issues that arise on appeal in other cases

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) a decision by the Secretary of State falls to be made under section 11, 12, 16 or 17 in relation to a maintenance assessment; and
 - (b) an appeal is pending against a decision given in relation to a different maintenance assessment by a Child Support Commissioner or a court.
- (2) If the Secretary of State considers it possible that the result of the appeal will be such that, if it were already determined, it would affect the decision in some way—
 - (a) he need not, except in such cases or circumstances as may be prescribed, make the decision while the appeal is pending;
 - (b) he may, in such cases or circumstances as may be prescribed, make the decision on such basis as may be prescribed.
- (3) Where the Secretary of State acts in accordance with subsection (2)(b), following the determination of the appeal he shall if appropriate revise his decision (under section 16) in accordance with that determination.
- (4) For the purposes of this section, an appeal against a decision is pending if—
 - (a) an appeal against the decision has been brought but not determined;
 - (b) an application for leave to appeal against the decision has been made but not determined; or
 - (c) in such circumstances as may be prescribed, an appeal against the decision has not been brought (or, as the case may be, an application for leave to appeal against the decision has not been made) but the time for doing so has not yet expired.
- (5) In paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of subsection (4), any reference to an appeal, or an application for leave to appeal, against a decision includes a reference to—
 - (a) an application for, or for leave to apply for, judicial review of the decision under section 31 of the Supreme Court Act 1981; or
 - (b) an application to the supervisory jurisdiction of the Court of Session in respect of the decision.

28ZB Appeals involving issues that arise on appeal in other cases

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) an appeal (“appeal A”) in relation to a decision falling within section 20(1) or (3), or an assessment falling within section 20(2), is made to an appeal tribunal, or from an appeal tribunal to a Child Support Commissioner; and
 - (b) an appeal (“appeal B”) is pending against a decision given in a different case by a Child Support Commissioner or a court.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (2) If the Secretary of State considers it possible that the result of appeal B will be such that, if it were already determined, it would affect the determination of appeal A, he may serve notice requiring the tribunal or Child Support Commissioner—
 - (a) not to determine appeal A but to refer it to him; or
 - (b) to deal with the appeal in accordance with subsection (4).
- (3) Where appeal A is referred to the Secretary of State under subsection (2)(a), following the determination of appeal B and in accordance with that determination, he shall if appropriate—
 - (a) in a case where appeal A has not been determined by the tribunal, revise (under section 16) his decision which gave rise to that appeal; or
 - (b) in a case where appeal A has been determined by the tribunal, make a decision (under section 17) superseding the tribunal’s decision.
- (4) Where appeal A is to be dealt with in accordance with this subsection, the appeal tribunal or Child Support Commissioner shall either—
 - (a) stay appeal A until appeal B is determined; or
 - (b) if the tribunal or Child Support Commissioner considers it to be in the interests of the appellant to do so, determine appeal A as if—
 - (i) appeal B had already been determined; and
 - (ii) the issues arising on appeal B had been decided in the way that was most unfavourable to the appellant.

In this subsection “the appellant” means the person who appealed or, as the case may be, first appealed against the decision or assessment mentioned in subsection (1)(a).
- (5) Where the appeal tribunal or Child Support Commissioner acts in accordance with subsection (4)(b), following the determination of appeal B the Secretary of State shall, if appropriate, make a decision (under section 17) superseding the decision of the tribunal or Child Support Commissioner in accordance with that determination.
- (6) For the purposes of this section, an appeal against a decision is pending if—
 - (a) an appeal against the decision has been brought but not determined;
 - (b) an application for leave to appeal against the decision has been made but not determined; or
 - (c) in such circumstances as may be prescribed, an appeal against the decision has not been brought (or, as the case may be, an application for leave to appeal against the decision has not been made) but the time for doing so has not yet expired.
- (7) In this section—
 - (a) the reference in subsection (1)(a) to an appeal to a Child Support Commissioner includes a reference to an application for leave to appeal to a Child Support Commissioner; and
 - (b) any reference in paragraph (a), (b) or (c) of subsection (6) to an appeal, or to an application for leave to appeal, against a decision includes a reference to—
 - (i) an application for, or for leave to apply for, judicial review of the decision under section 31 of the Supreme Court Act 1981; or
 - (ii) an application to the supervisory jurisdiction of the Court of Session in respect of the decision.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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(8) Regulations may make provision supplementing that made by this section.]

F⁶⁰ Cases of error

Textual Amendments

F60 Ss. 28ZC, 28ZD and cross-heading inserted (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), [ss. 44, 87\(2\)](#); [S.I. 1999/528](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#), [Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510](#), [art. 2\(d\)](#)

28ZC Restrictions on liability in certain cases of error

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), this section applies where—
- (a) the effect of the determination, whenever made, of an appeal to a Child Support Commissioner or the court (“the relevant determination”) is that the adjudicating authority’s decision out of which the appeal arose was erroneous in point of law; and
 - (b) after the date of the relevant determination a decision falls to be made by the Secretary of State in accordance with that determination (or would, apart from this section, fall to be so made)—
 - (i) with respect to an application for a maintenance assessment (made after the commencement date);
 - (ii) as to whether to revise, under section 16, a decision (made after the commencement date) with respect to such an assessment; or
 - (iii) on an application under section 17 (made after the commencement date) for a decision with respect to such an assessment to be superseded.
- (2) This section does not apply where the decision of the Secretary of State mentioned in subsection (1)(b)—
- (a) is one which, but for section 28ZA(2)(a), would have been made before the date of the relevant determination; or
 - (b) is one made in pursuance of section 28ZB(3) or (5).
- (3) In so far as the decision relates to a person’s liability in respect of a period before the date of the relevant determination, it shall be made as if the adjudicating authority’s decision had been found by the Commissioner or court not to have been erroneous in point of law.
- (4) Subsection (1)(a) shall be read as including a case where—
- (a) the effect of the relevant determination is that part or all of a purported regulation or order is invalid; and
 - (b) the error of law made by the adjudicating authority was to act on the basis that the purported regulation or order (or the part held to be invalid) was valid.
- (5) It is immaterial for the purposes of subsection (1)—
- (a) where such a decision as is mentioned in paragraph (b)(i) falls to be made; or
 - (b) where such a decision as is mentioned in paragraph (b)(ii) or (iii) falls to be made on an application under section 16 or (as the case may be) section 17, whether the application was made before or after the date of the relevant determination.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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(6) In this section—

“adjudicating authority” means the Secretary of State, or a child support officer;

“the commencement date” means the date of the coming into force of section 44 of the Social Security Act 1998; and

“the court” means the High Court, the Court of Appeal, the Court of Session, the High Court or Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland, the House of Lords or the Court of Justice of the European Community.

(7) The date of the relevant determination shall, in prescribed cases, be determined for the purposes of this section in accordance with any regulations made for that purpose.

(8) Regulations made under subsection (7) may include provision—

- (a) for a determination of a higher court to be treated as if it had been made on the date of a determination of a lower court or a Child Support Commissioner; or
- (b) for a determination of a lower court or a Child Support Commissioner to be treated as if it had been made on the date of a determination of a higher court.

28ZD Correction of errors and setting aside of decisions

(1) Regulations may make provision with respect to—

- (a) the correction of accidental errors in any decision or record of a decision given under this Act; and
- (b) the setting aside of any such decision in a case where it appears just to set the decision aside on the ground that—
 - (i) a document relating to the proceedings in which the decision was given was not sent to, or was not received at an appropriate time by, a party to the proceedings or a party’s representative or was not received at an appropriate time by the body or person who gave the decision; or
 - (ii) a party to the proceedings or a party’s representative was not present at a hearing related to the proceedings.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) shall be construed as derogating from any power to correct errors or set aside decisions which is exercisable apart from regulations made by virtue of that subsection.]

F⁶¹ Variations

Textual Amendments

F61 Ss. 28A-28C substituted for ss. 28A-28C (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), [ss. 5\(2\)](#), [86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with [ss. 28](#), [83\(6\)](#)); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch. Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2003/192](#), [art. 3](#), [Sch.](#)

28A Application for variation of usual rules for calculating maintenance.

(1) Where an application for a maintenance calculation is made under section 4 or 7, or treated as made under section 6, the person with care or the non-resident parent or (in the case of an application under section 7) either of them or the child concerned may

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apply to the Secretary of State for the rules by which the calculation is made to be varied in accordance with this Act.

- (2) Such an application is referred to in this Act as an “application for a variation”.
- (3) An application for a variation may be made at any time before the Secretary of State has reached a decision (under section 11 or 12(1)) on the application for a maintenance calculation (or the application treated as having been made under section 6).
- (4) A person who applies for a variation—
 - (a) need not make the application in writing unless the Secretary of State directs in any case that he must; and
 - (b) must say upon what grounds the application is made.
- (5) In other respects an application for a variation is to be made in such manner as may be prescribed.
- (6) Schedule 4A has effect in relation to applications for a variation.]

[^{F61}28B Preliminary consideration of applications.

- (1) Where an application for a variation has been duly made to the Secretary of State, he may give it a preliminary consideration.
- (2) Where he does so he may, on completing the preliminary consideration, reject the application (and proceed to make his decision on the application for a maintenance calculation without any variation) if it appears to him—
 - (a) that there are no grounds on which he could agree to a variation;
 - (b) that he has insufficient information to make a decision on the application for the maintenance calculation under section 11 (apart from any information needed in relation to the application for a variation), and therefore that his decision would be made under section 12(1); or
 - (c) that other prescribed circumstances apply.]

[^{F61}28C Imposition of regular payments condition.

- (1) Where—
 - (a) an application for a variation is made by the non-resident parent; and
 - (b) the Secretary of State makes an interim maintenance decision,
 the Secretary of State may also, if he has completed his preliminary consideration (under section 28B) of the application for a variation and has not rejected it under that section, impose on the non-resident parent one of the conditions mentioned in subsection (2) (a “regular payments condition”).
- (2) The conditions are that—
 - (a) the non-resident parent must make the payments of child support maintenance specified in the interim maintenance decision;
 - (b) the non-resident parent must make such lesser payments of child support maintenance as may be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State.

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- (3) Where the Secretary of State imposes a regular payments condition, he shall give written notice of the imposition of the condition and of the effect of failure to comply with it to—
 - (a) the non-resident parent;
 - (b) all the persons with care concerned; and
 - (c) if the application for the maintenance calculation was made under section 7, the child who made the application.
- (4) A regular payments condition shall cease to have effect—
 - (a) when the Secretary of State has made a decision on the application for a maintenance calculation under section 11 (whether he agrees to a variation or not);
 - (b) on the withdrawal of the application for a variation.
- (5) Where a non-resident parent has failed to comply with a regular payments condition, the Secretary of State may in prescribed circumstances refuse to consider the application for a variation, and instead reach his decision under section 11 as if no such application had been made.
- (6) The question whether a non-resident parent has failed to comply with a regular payments condition is to be determined by the Secretary of State.
- (7) Where the Secretary of State determines that a non-resident parent has failed to comply with a regular payments condition he shall give written notice of his determination to—
 - (a) that parent;
 - (b) all the persons with care concerned; and
 - (c) if the application for the maintenance calculation was made under section 7, the child who made the application.]

[^{F62}28D Determination of applications.

- [^{F63}(1) Where an application for a variation has not failed, the Secretary of State shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions of, or made under, this Act—
 - (a) either agree or not to a variation, and make a decision under section 11 or 12(1); or
 - (b) refer the application to an appeal tribunal for the tribunal to determine what variation, if any, is to be made.]
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), [^{F64}an application for a variation] has failed if—
 - (a) it has ^{F65}... been withdrawn; or
 - (b) the Secretary of State has rejected it on completing a preliminary consideration under section 28B; [^{F66}or]

[^{F66}(c) the Secretary of State has refused to consider it under section 28C(5).]
- (3) In dealing with [^{F64}an application for a variation] which has been referred to it under subsection (1)(b), [^{F67}an appeal tribunal] shall have the same powers, and be subject to the same duties, as would the Secretary of State if he were dealing with the application.]

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Textual Amendments

- F62** S. 28D inserted (2.12.1996) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 4, 30\(4\)](#); S.I. 1996/2630, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 2
- F63** S. 28D(1) substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 5\(3\)\(a\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F64** Words in s. 28D(2)(3) substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 5\(3\)\(b\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F65** Words in s. 28D(2)(a) repealed (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 5\(3\)\(c\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\), Sch. 9 Pt. I](#) (with s. 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F66** S. 28D(2)(c) and preceding word inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 5\(3\)\(c\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F67** Words in s. 28D(1)(3) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 36](#); S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

[^{F68}28E Matters to be taken into account.

- (1) In determining [^{F69}whether to agree to a variation], the Secretary of State shall have regard both to the general principles set out in subsection (2) and to such other considerations as may be prescribed.
- (2) The general principles are that—
 - (a) parents should be responsible for maintaining their children whenever they can afford to do so;
 - (b) where a parent has more than one child, his obligation to maintain any one of them should be no less of an obligation than his obligation to maintain any other of them.
- (3) In determining [^{F69}whether to agree to a variation], the Secretary of State shall take into account any representations made to him—
 - (a) by the person with care or absent parent concerned; or
 - (b) where the application for the current assessment was made under section 7, by either of them or the child concerned.
- (4) In determining [^{F69}whether to agree to a variation], no account shall be taken of the fact that—
 - (a) any part of the income of the person with care concerned is, or would be if [^{F70}the Secretary of State agreed to a variation], derived from any benefit; or
 - (b) some or all of any child support maintenance might be taken into account in any manner in relation to any entitlement to benefit.
- (5) In this section “benefit” has such meaning as may be prescribed.]

Textual Amendments

- F68** S. 28E inserted (14.10.1996 for specified purposes, 2.12.1996 in so far as not already in force) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 5, 30\(4\)](#); S.I. 1996/2630, art. 2, Sch. Pts. 1, 2

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- F69** Words in s. 28E(1)(3)(4) substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 5\(4\)\(a\)](#), 86(1)(a)(2) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1
- F70** Words in s. 28E(4)(a) substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 5\(4\)\(b\)](#), 86(1)(a)(2) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

[^{F71}28F Agreement to a variation.

- (1) The Secretary of State may agree to a variation if—
 - (a) he is satisfied that the case is one which falls within one or more of the cases set out in Part I of Schedule 4B or in regulations made under that Part; and
 - (b) it is his opinion that, in all the circumstances of the case, it would be just and equitable to agree to a variation.
- (2) In considering whether it would be just and equitable in any case to agree to a variation, the Secretary of State—
 - (a) must have regard, in particular, to the welfare of any child likely to be affected if he did agree to a variation; and
 - (b) must, or as the case may be must not, take any prescribed factors into account, or must take them into account (or not) in prescribed circumstances.
- (3) The Secretary of State shall not agree to a variation (and shall proceed to make his decision on the application for a maintenance calculation without any variation) if he is satisfied that—
 - (a) he has insufficient information to make a decision on the application for the maintenance calculation under section 11, and therefore that his decision would be made under section 12(1); or
 - (b) other prescribed circumstances apply.
- (4) Where the Secretary of State agrees to a variation, he shall—
 - (a) determine the basis on which the amount of child support maintenance is to be calculated in response to the application for a maintenance calculation (including an application treated as having been made); and
 - (b) make a decision under section 11 on that basis.
- (5) If the Secretary of State has made an interim maintenance decision, it is to be treated as having been replaced by his decision under section 11, and except in prescribed circumstances any appeal connected with it (under section 20) shall lapse.
- (6) In determining whether or not to agree to a variation, the Secretary of State shall comply with regulations made under Part II of Schedule 4B.]

Textual Amendments

- F71** S. 28F substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 5\(5\)](#), 86(1)(a)(2) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; S.I. 2003/192, art. 3, Sch.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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[^{F72}28G Variations: revision and supersession.

- (1) An application for a variation may also be made when a maintenance calculation is in force.
- (2) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for—
 - (a) sections 16, 17 and 20; and
 - (b) sections 28A to 28F and Schedules 4A and 4B,
 to apply with prescribed modifications in relation to such applications.
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that, in prescribed cases (or except in prescribed cases), a decision under section 17 made otherwise than pursuant to an application for a variation may be made on the basis of a variation agreed to for the purposes of an earlier decision without a new application for a variation having to be made.]

Textual Amendments

F72 S. 28G substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 1.1.2001 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), [ss. 7, 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with [ss. 28, 83\(6\)](#)); [S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pts. 1, 2](#); [S.I. 2003/192, art. 3, Sch.](#)

[^{F73}28H Departure directions: decisions and appeals

Schedule 4C shall have effect for applying sections 16, 17, 20 and 28ZA to 28ZC to decisions with respect to departure directions.]

Textual Amendments

F73 S. 28H substituted (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), [s. 87\(2\)](#), [Sch. 7 para. 39](#); [S.I. 1999/528, art. 2\(a\)](#), [Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)

[^{F74}28I Transitional provisions.

- (1) In the case of an application for a departure direction relating to a maintenance assessment which was made before the coming into force of section 28A, the period within which the application must be made shall be such period as may be prescribed.
- (2) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for applications for departure directions to be dealt with according to an order determined in accordance with the regulations.
- (3) The regulations may, for example, provide for—
 - (a) applications relating to prescribed descriptions of maintenance assessment, or
 - (b) prescribed descriptions of application,
 to be dealt with before applications relating to other prescribed descriptions of assessment or (as the case may be) other prescribed descriptions of application.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision—

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- (a) enabling applications for departure directions made before the coming into force of section 28A to be considered even though that section is not in force;
 - (b) for the determination of any such application as if section 28A and the other provisions of this Act relating to departure directions were in force; and
 - (c) as to the effect of any departure direction given before the coming into force of section 28A.
- (5) Regulations under section 28G(4) may not provide for a departure direction to have effect from a date earlier than that on which that section came into force.]

Textual Amendments

F74 S. 28I inserted (22.1.1996 for specified purposes, 14.10.1996 for specified purposes) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\), ss. 9, 30\(4\)](#); [S.I. 1995/3262, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 2](#); [S.I. 1996/2630, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#)

[^{F75}Voluntary payments

Textual Amendments

F75 S. 28J and cross-heading inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 20\(1\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with [ss. 28, 83\(6\)](#)); [S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2003/192, art. 5](#)

28J Voluntary payments.

- (1) This section applies where—
- (a) a person has applied for a maintenance calculation under section 4(1) or 7(1), or is treated as having applied for one by virtue of section 6;
 - (b) the Secretary of State has neither made a decision under section 11 or 12 on the application, nor decided not to make a maintenance calculation; and
 - (c) the non-resident parent makes a voluntary payment.
- (2) A “voluntary payment” is a payment—
- (a) on account of child support maintenance which the non-resident parent expects to become liable to pay following the determination of the application (whether or not the amount of the payment is based on any estimate of his potential liability which the Secretary of State has agreed to give); and
 - (b) made before the maintenance calculation has been notified to the non-resident parent or (as the case may be) before the Secretary of State has notified the non-resident parent that he has decided not to make a maintenance calculation.
- (3) In such circumstances and to such extent as may be prescribed—
- (a) the voluntary payment may be set off against arrears of child support maintenance which accrued by virtue of the maintenance calculation taking effect on a date earlier than that on which it was notified to the non-resident parent;
 - (b) the amount payable under a maintenance calculation may be adjusted to take account of the voluntary payment.

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- (4) A voluntary payment shall be made to the Secretary of State unless he agrees, on such conditions as he may specify, that it may be made to the person with care, or to or through another person.
- (5) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision as to voluntary payments, and the regulations may in particular—
 - (a) prescribe what payments or descriptions of payment are, or are not, to count as “voluntary payments”;
 - (b) prescribe the extent to which and circumstances in which a payment, or a payment of a prescribed description, counts.]

Collection and enforcement

29 Collection of child support maintenance.

- (1) The Secretary of State may arrange for the collection of any child support maintenance payable in accordance with a maintenance assessment where—
 - (a) the assessment is made by virtue of section 6; or
 - (b) an application has been made to the Secretary of State under section 4(2) or 7(3) for him to arrange for its collection.
- (2) Where a maintenance assessment is made under this Act, payments of child support maintenance under the assessment shall be made in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State.
- (3) The regulations may, in particular, make provision—
 - (a) for payments of child support maintenance to be made—
 - (i) to the person caring for the child or children in question;
 - (ii) to, or through, the Secretary of State; or
 - (iii) to, or through, such other person as the Secretary of State may, from time to time, specify;
 - (b) as to the method by which payments of child support maintenance are to be made;
 - (c) as to the intervals at which such payments are to be made;
 - (d) as to the method and timing of the transmission of payments which are made, to or through the Secretary of State or any other person, in accordance with the regulations;
 - (e) empowering the Secretary of State to direct any person liable to make payments in accordance with the assessment—
 - (i) to make them by standing order or by any other method which requires one person to give his authority for payments to be made from an account of his to an account of another’s on specific dates during the period for which the authority is in force and without the need for any further authority from him;
 - (ii) to open an account from which payments under the assessment may be made in accordance with the method of payment which that person is obliged to adopt;
 - (f) providing for the making of representations with respect to matters with which the regulations are concerned.

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Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C29** S. 29 amended (5.4.1993) by [The Child Support \(Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements\) Regulations 1993 \(S.I. 1993/584\)](#), reg. 2(2), [Sch.2](#)
- C30** S. 29(2)(3) applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643](#), [reg.3](#); s. 29(2)(3) applied (with modifications) (S.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643](#), [reg.4](#)

Commencement Information

- I11** S. 29 wholly in force; s. 29 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 29(2)(3) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch.](#); s. 29 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644](#), [art. 2](#)

30 Collection and enforcement of other forms of maintenance.

- (1) Where the Secretary of State is arranging for the collection of any payments under section 29 or subsection (2), he may also arrange for the collection of any periodical payments, or secured periodical payments, of a prescribed kind which are payable to or for the benefit of any person who falls within a prescribed category.
- (2) The Secretary of State may arrange for the collection of any periodical payments or secured periodical payments of a prescribed kind which are payable for the benefit of a child even though he is not arranging for the collection of child support maintenance with respect to that child.
- (3) Where—
 - (a) the Secretary of State is arranging, under this Act, for the collection of different payments (“the payments”) from the same absent parent;
 - (b) an amount is collected by the Secretary of State from the absent parent which is less than the total amount due in respect of the payments; and
 - (c) the absent parent has not stipulated how that amount is to be allocated by the Secretary of State as between the payments,the Secretary of State may allocate that amount as he sees fit.
- (4) In relation to England and Wales, the Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for sections 29 and 31 to 40 to apply, with such modifications (if any) as he considers necessary or expedient, for the purpose of enabling him to enforce any obligation to pay any amount which he is authorised to collect under this section.
- (5) In relation to Scotland, the Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the purpose of enabling him to enforce any obligation to pay any amount which he is authorised to collect under this section—
 - (a) empowering him to bring any proceedings or take any other steps (other than diligence against earnings) which could have been brought or taken by or on behalf of the person to whom the periodical payments are payable;
 - (b) applying sections 29, 31 and 32 with such modifications (if any) as he considers necessary or expedient.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C31** S. 30 amended (5.4.1993) by [The Child Support \(Northern Ireland Reciprocal Arrangements\) Regulations 1993 \(S.I. 1993/584\)](#), reg. 2(2), [Sch. 2](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Commencement Information

I12 S. 30 partly in force; s. 30 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 30(1)(4)(5) in force at 17.6.1992 by S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.; s. 30(3) in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2

31 Deduction from earnings orders.

- (1) This section applies where any person (“the liable person”) is liable to make payments of child support maintenance.
- (2) The Secretary of State may make an order (“a deduction from earnings order”) against a liable person to secure the payment of any amount due under the maintenance assessment in question.
- (3) A deduction from earnings order may be made so as to secure the payment of—
 - (a) arrears of child support maintenance payable under the assessment;
 - (b) amounts of child support maintenance which will become due under the assessment; or
 - (c) both such arrears and such future amounts.
- (4) A deduction from earnings order—
 - (a) shall be expressed to be directed at a person (“the employer”) who has the liable person in his employment; and
 - (b) shall have effect from such date as may be specified in the order.
- (5) A deduction from earnings order shall operate as an instruction to the employer to—
 - (a) make deductions from the liable person’s earnings; and
 - (b) pay the amounts deducted to the Secretary of State.
- (6) The Secretary of State shall serve a copy of any deduction from earnings order which he makes under this section on—
 - (a) the person who appears to the Secretary of State to have the liable person in question in his employment; and
 - (b) the liable person.
- (7) Where—
 - (a) a deduction from earnings order has been made; and
 - (b) a copy of the order has been served on the liable person’s employer,
 it shall be the duty of that employer to comply with the order; but he shall not be under any liability for non-compliance before the end of the period of 7 days beginning with the date on which the copy was served on him.
- (8) In this section and in section 32 “earnings” has such meaning as may be prescribed.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C32 S. 31 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by S.I. 1992/2643, reg.3; s. 31 applied (with modifications) (S.) (5.4.1993) by S.I. 1992/2643, reg.4

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Commencement Information

I13 S. 31 wholly in force; s. 31 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 31(8) in force at 17.6.1992 by S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.; s. 31 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2

32 Regulations about deduction from earnings orders.

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision with respect to deduction from earnings orders.
- (2) The regulations may, in particular, make provision—
 - (a) as to the circumstances in which one person is to be treated as employed by another;
 - (b) requiring any deduction from earnings under an order to be made in the prescribed manner;
 - (c) requiring an order to specify the amount or amounts to which the order relates and the amount or amounts which are to be deducted from the liable person's earnings in order to meet his liabilities under the maintenance assessment in question;
 - (d) requiring the intervals between deductions to be made under an order to be specified in the order;
 - (e) as to the payment of sums deducted under an order to the Secretary of State;
 - (f) allowing the person who deducts and pays any amount under an order to deduct from the liable person's earnings a prescribed sum towards his administrative costs;
 - (g) with respect to the notification to be given to the liable person of amounts deducted, and amounts paid, under the order;
 - (h) requiring any person on whom a copy of an order is served to notify the Secretary of State in the prescribed manner and within a prescribed period if he does not have the liable person in his employment or if the liable person ceases to be in his employment;
 - (i) as to the operation of an order where the liable person is in the employment of the Crown;
 - (j) for the variation of orders;
 - (k) similar to that made by section 31(7), in relation to any variation of an order;
 - (l) for an order to lapse when the employer concerned ceases to have the liable person in his employment;
 - (m) as to the revival of an order in such circumstances as may be prescribed;
 - (n) allowing or requiring an order to be discharged;
 - (o) as to the giving of notice by the Secretary of State to the employer concerned that an order has lapsed or has ceased to have effect.
- (3) The regulations may include provision that while a deduction from earnings order is in force—
 - (a) the liable person shall from time to time notify the Secretary of State, in the prescribed manner and within a prescribed period, of each occasion on which he leaves any employment or becomes employed, or re-employed, and shall include in such a notification a statement of his earnings and expected earnings from the employment concerned and of such other matters as may be prescribed;

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (b) any person who becomes the liable person's employer and knows that the order is in force shall notify the Secretary of State, in the prescribed manner and within a prescribed period, that he is the liable person's employer, and shall include in such a notification a statement of the liable person's earnings and expected earnings from the employment concerned and of such other matters as may be prescribed.
- (4) The regulations may include provision with respect to the priority as between a deduction from earnings order and—
- (a) any other deduction from earnings order;
 - (b) any order under any other enactment relating to England and Wales which provides for deductions from the liable person's earnings;
 - (c) any diligence against earnings.
- (5) The regulations may include a provision that a liable person may appeal to a magistrates' court (or in Scotland to the sheriff) if he is aggrieved by the making of a deduction from earnings order against him, or by the terms of any such order, or there is a dispute as to whether payments constitute earnings or as to any other prescribed matter relating to the order.
- (6) On an appeal under subsection (5) the court or (as the case may be) the sheriff shall not question the maintenance assessment by reference to which the deduction from earnings order was made.
- (7) Regulations made by virtue of subsection (5) may include provision as to the powers of a magistrates' court, or in Scotland of the sheriff, in relation to an appeal (which may include provision as to the quashing of a deduction from earnings order or the variation of the terms of such an order).
- (8) If any person fails to comply with the requirements of a deduction from earnings order, or with any regulation under this section which is designated for the purposes of this subsection, he shall be guilty of an offence.
- (9) In subsection (8) "designated" means designated by the regulations.
- (10) It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under subsection (8) to prove that he took all reasonable steps to comply with the requirements in question.
- (11) Any person guilty of an offence under subsection (8) shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level two on the standard scale.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C33 S. 32 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643](#), [reg.3](#); s. 32 applied (with modifications) (S.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643](#), [reg.4](#)

Commencement Information

I14 S. 32 wholly in force; s. 32 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 32(1)-(5)(7)-(9) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch.](#); s. 32 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644](#), [art. 2](#)

33 Liability orders.

- (1) This section applies where—

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (a) a person who is liable to make payments of child support maintenance (“the liable person”) fails to make one or more of those payments; and
 - (b) it appears to the Secretary of State that—
 - (i) it is inappropriate to make a deduction from earnings order against him (because, for example, he is not employed); or
 - (ii) although such an order has been made against him, it has proved ineffective as a means of securing that payments are made in accordance with the maintenance assessment in question.
- (2) The Secretary of State may apply to a magistrates’ court or, in Scotland, to the sheriff for an order (“a liability order”) against the liable person.
- (3) Where the Secretary of State applies for a liability order, the magistrates’ court or (as the case may be) sheriff shall make the order if satisfied that the payments in question have become payable by the liable person and have not been paid.
- (4) On an application under subsection (2), the court or (as the case may be) the sheriff shall not question the maintenance assessment under which the payments of child support maintenance fell to be made.
- [^{F76}(5) If the Secretary of State designates a liability order for the purposes of this subsection it shall be treated as a judgment entered in a county court for the purposes of section 73 of the County Courts Act 1984 (register of judgments and orders).]
- [^{F77}(6) Where regulations have been made under section 29(3)(a)—
- (a) the liable person fails to make a payment (for the purposes of subsection (1) (a) of this section); and
 - (b) a payment is not paid (for the purposes of subsection (3)),
- unless the payment is made to, or through, the person specified in or by virtue of those regulations for the case of the liable person in question.]

Textual Amendments

F76 S. 33(5) added (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), s. 30(4), [Sch. 3 para. 10](#); [S.I. 1995/2302](#), art. 2, [Sch. Pt. 1](#)

F77 S. 33(6) inserted (1.1.2001) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), s. 86(1) (a)(2), [Sch. 3 para. 11\(17\)](#) (with s. 83(6)); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), art. 2(3)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C34 S. 33 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643](#), [reg.3](#)

34 Regulations about liability orders.

- (1) The Secretary of State may make regulations in relation to England and Wales—
- (a) prescribing the procedure to be followed in dealing with an application by the Secretary of State for a liability order;
 - (b) prescribing the form and contents of a liability order; and
 - (c) providing that where a magistrates’ court has made a liability order, the person against whom it is made shall, during such time as the amount in respect of which the order was made remains wholly or partly unpaid, be under a duty to supply relevant information to the Secretary of State.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (2) In subsection (1) “relevant information” means any information of a prescribed description which is in the possession of the liable person and which the Secretary of State has asked him to supply.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C35 S. 34 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643](#), [reg.3](#)

Commencement Information

I15 S. 34 partly in force; s. 34 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 34(1) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch.](#)

35 Enforcement of liability orders by distress.

- (1) Where a liability order has been made against a person (“the liable person”), the Secretary of State may levy the appropriate amount by distress and sale of the liable person’s goods.
- (2) In subsection (1), “the appropriate amount” means the aggregate of—
- (a) the amount in respect of which the order was made, to the extent that it remains unpaid; and
 - (b) an amount, determined in such manner as may be prescribed, in respect of the charges connected with the distress.
- (3) The Secretary of State may, in exercising his powers under subsection (1) against the liable person’s goods, seize—
- (a) any of the liable person’s goods except—
 - (i) such tools, books, vehicles and other items of equipment as are necessary to him for use personally by him in his employment, business or vocation;
 - (ii) such clothing, bedding, furniture, household equipment and provisions as are necessary for satisfying his basic domestic needs; and
 - (b) any money, banknotes, bills of exchange, promissory notes, bonds, specialties or securities for money belonging to the liable person.
- (4) For the purposes of subsection (3), the liable person’s domestic needs shall be taken to include those of any member of his family with whom he resides.
- (5) No person levying a distress under this section shall be taken to be a trespasser—
- (a) on that account; or
 - (b) from the beginning, on account of any subsequent irregularity in levying the distress.
- (6) A person sustaining special damage by reason of any irregularity in levying a distress under this section may recover full satisfaction for the damage (and no more) by proceedings in trespass or otherwise.
- (7) The Secretary of State may make regulations supplementing the provisions of this section.
- (8) The regulations may, in particular—

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (a) provide that a distress under this section may be levied anywhere in England and Wales;
- (b) provide that such a distress shall not be deemed unlawful on account of any defect or want of form in the liability order;
- (c) provide for an appeal to a magistrates' court by any person aggrieved by the levying of, or an attempt to levy, a distress under this section;
- (d) make provision as to the powers of the court on an appeal (which may include provision as to the discharge of goods distrained or the payment of compensation in respect of goods distrained and sold).

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C36 S. 35 applied (with modifications) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643, reg.3](#)

Commencement Information

I16 S. 35 wholly in force; s. 35 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 35(2)(b)(7)(8) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.](#); s. 35 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2](#)

36 Enforcement in county courts.

- (1) Where a liability order has been made against a person, the amount in respect of which the order was made, to the extent that it remains unpaid, shall, if a county court so orders, be recoverable by means of garnishee proceedings or a charging order, as if it were payable under a county court order.
- (2) In subsection (1) “charging order” has the same meaning as in section 1 of the ^{M15}Charging Orders Act 1979.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C37 S. 36 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643, reg.3](#)

Marginal Citations

M15 1979 c. 53.

37 Regulations about liability orders: Scotland.

- (1) Section 34(1) does not apply to Scotland.
- (2) In Scotland, the Secretary of State may make regulations providing that where the sheriff has made a liability order, the person against whom it is made shall, during such time as the amount in respect of which the order was made remains wholly or partly unpaid, be under a duty to supply relevant information to the Secretary of State.
- (3) In this section “relevant information” has the same meaning as in section 34(2).

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C38 S. 37 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643, reg.3](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Commencement Information

I17 S. 37 partly in force; s. 37 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 37(1) in force at 5.4.1993 by S.I. 1992/2644, [art. 2](#)

38 Enforcement of liability orders by diligence: Scotland.

- (1) In Scotland, where a liability order has been made against a person, the order shall be warrant anywhere in Scotland—
- (a) for the Secretary of State to charge the person to pay the appropriate amount and to recover that amount by a pointing and sale under Part II of the ^{M16}Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987 and, in connection therewith, for the opening of shut and lockfast places;
 - (b) for an arrestment (other than an arrestment of the person's earnings in the hands of his employers) and action of furthcoming or sale,
- and shall be apt to found a Bill of Inhibition or an action of adjudication at the instance of the Secretary of State.
- (2) In subsection (1) the “appropriate amount” means the amount in respect of which the order was made, to the extent that it remains unpaid.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C39 S. 38 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by S.I. 1992/2643, [reg.3](#)

Marginal Citations

M16 1987 c. 18.

39 Liability orders: enforcement throughout United Kingdom.

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for—
- (a) any liability order made by a court in England and Wales; or
 - (b) any corresponding order made by a court in Northern Ireland,
- to be enforced in Scotland as if it had been made by the sheriff.
- (2) The power conferred on the Court of Session by section 32 of the ^{M17}Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 (power of Court of Session to regulate civil procedure in the sheriff court) shall extend to making provision for the registration in the sheriff court for enforcement of any such order as is referred to in subsection (1).
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for, or in connection with, the enforcement in England and Wales of—
- (a) any liability order made by the sheriff in Scotland; or
 - (b) any corresponding order made by a court in Northern Ireland,
- as if it had been made by a magistrates' court in England and Wales.
- (4) Regulations under subsection (3) may, in particular, make provision for the registration of any such order as is referred to in that subsection in connection with its enforcement in England and Wales.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C40 S. 39 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643, reg.3](#)

Marginal Citations

M17 [1971 c. 58.](#)

[^{F78}**39A Commitment to prison and disqualification from driving.**

- (1) Where the Secretary of State has sought—
 - (a) in England and Wales to levy an amount by distress under this Act; or
 - (b) to recover an amount by virtue of section 36 or 38,and that amount, or any portion of it, remains unpaid he may apply to the court under this section.
- (2) An application under this section is for whichever the court considers appropriate in all the circumstances of—
 - (a) the issue of a warrant committing the liable person to prison; or
 - (b) an order for him to be disqualified from holding or obtaining a driving licence.
- (3) On any such application the court shall (in the presence of the liable person) inquire as to—
 - (a) whether he needs a driving licence to earn his living;
 - (b) his means; and
 - (c) whether there has been wilful refusal or culpable neglect on his part.
- (4) The Secretary of State may make representations to the court as to whether he thinks it more appropriate to commit the liable person to prison or to disqualify him from holding or obtaining a driving licence; and the liable person may reply to those representations.
- (5) In this section and section 40B, “driving licence” means a licence to drive a motor vehicle granted under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988.
- (6) In this section “the court” means—
 - (a) in England and Wales, a magistrates’ court;
 - (b) in Scotland, the sheriff.]

Textual Amendments

F78 S. 39A inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 2.4.2001 in so far as not already in force) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 16\(1\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with [ss. 28, 83\(6\)](#)); [S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2000/3354, art. 2](#)

40 Commitment to prison.

- ^{F79}(1)
- ^{F79}(2)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (3) If, but only if, the court is of the opinion that there has been wilful refusal or culpable neglect on the part of the liable person it may—
 - (a) issue a warrant of commitment against him; or
 - (b) fix a term of imprisonment and postpone the issue of the warrant until such time and on such conditions (if any) as it thinks just.
- (4) Any such warrant—
 - (a) shall be made in respect of an amount equal to the aggregate of—
 - (i) the amount mentioned in section 35(1) or so much of it as remains outstanding; and
 - (ii) an amount (determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State) in respect of the costs of commitment; and
 - (b) shall state that amount.
- (5) No warrant may be issued under this section against a person who is under the age of 18.
- (6) A warrant issued under this section shall order the liable person—
 - (a) to be imprisoned for a specified period; but
 - (b) to be released (unless he is in custody for some other reason) on payment of the amount stated in the warrant.
- (7) The maximum period of imprisonment which may be imposed by virtue of subsection (6) shall be calculated in accordance with Schedule 4 to the ^{M18}Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (maximum periods of imprisonment in default of payment) but shall not exceed six weeks.
- (8) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the period of imprisonment specified in any warrant issued under this section to be reduced where there is part payment of the amount in respect of which the warrant was issued.
- (9) A warrant issued under this section may be directed to such person or persons as the court issuing it thinks fit.
- (10) Section 80 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (application of money found on defaulter) shall apply in relation to a warrant issued under this section against a liable person as it applies in relation to the enforcement of a sum mentioned in subsection (1) of that section.
- (11) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision—
 - (a) as to the form of any warrant issued under this section;
 - (b) allowing an application under this section to be renewed where no warrant is issued or term of imprisonment is fixed;
 - (c) that a statement in writing to the effect that wages of any amount have been paid to the liable person during any period, purporting to be signed by or on behalf of his employer, shall be evidence of the facts stated;
 - (d) that, for the purposes of enabling an inquiry to be made as to the liable person's conduct and means, a justice of the peace may issue a summons to him to appear before a magistrates' court and (if he does not obey) may issue a warrant for his arrest;
 - (e) that for the purpose of enabling such an inquiry, a justice of the peace may issue a warrant for the liable person's arrest without issuing a summons;

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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(f) as to the execution of a warrant for arrest.

[^{F80}(12) This section does not apply to Scotland.]

Textual Amendments

F79 S. 40(1)(2) repealed (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 2.4.2001 in so far as not already in force) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), ss. 16(2), 86(1)(a)(2), [Sch. 9 Pt. 1](#) (with s. 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; S.I. 2000/3354, art. 2

F80 S. 40(12) substituted for s. 40(12)-(14) (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 2.4.2001 in so far as not already in force) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), ss. 17(1), 86(1)(a)(2) (with ss. 28, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; S.I. 2000/3354, art. 2

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C41 S. 40 applied (with modifications) (E.W.) (5.4.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2643](#), [reg.3](#)

Commencement Information

I18 S. 40 wholly in force; s. 40 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 40(4)(a)(ii)(8)(11) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch.](#); s. 40 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644](#), [art. 2](#)

Marginal Citations

M18 [1980 c. 43](#).

[^{F81}**40A Commitment to prison: Scotland.**

- (1) If, but only if, the sheriff is satisfied that there has been wilful refusal or culpable neglect on the part of the liable person he may—
 - (a) issue a warrant for his committal to prison; or
 - (b) fix a term of imprisonment and postpone the issue of the warrant until such time and on such conditions (if any) as he thinks just.
- (2) A warrant under this section—
 - (a) shall be made in respect of an amount equal to the aggregate of—
 - (i) the appropriate amount under section 38; and
 - (ii) an amount (determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State) in respect of the expenses of commitment; and
 - (b) shall state that amount.
- (3) No warrant may be issued under this section against a person who is under the age of 18.
- (4) A warrant issued under this section shall order the liable person—
 - (a) to be imprisoned for a specified period; but
 - (b) to be released (unless he is in custody for some other reason) on payment of the amount stated in the warrant.
- (5) The maximum period of imprisonment which may be imposed by virtue of subsection (4) is six weeks.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (6) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the period of imprisonment specified in any warrant issued under this section to be reduced where there is part payment of the amount in respect of which the warrant was issued.
- (7) A warrant issued under this section may be directed to such person as the sheriff thinks fit.
- (8) The power of the Court of Session by Act of Sederunt to regulate the procedure and practice in civil proceedings in the sheriff court shall include power to make provision—
 - (a) as to the form of any warrant issued under this section;
 - (b) allowing an application under this section to be renewed where no warrant is issued or term of imprisonment is fixed;
 - (c) that a statement in writing to the effect that wages of any amount have been paid to the liable person during any period, purporting to be signed by or on behalf of his employer, shall be sufficient evidence of the facts stated;
 - (d) that, for the purposes of enabling an inquiry to be made as to the liable person's conduct and means, the sheriff may issue a citation to him to appear before the sheriff and (if he does not obey) may issue a warrant for his arrest;
 - (e) that for the purpose of enabling such an inquiry, the sheriff may issue a warrant for the liable person's arrest without issuing a citation;
 - (f) as to the execution of a warrant of arrest.]

Textual Amendments

F81 S. 40A inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 2.4.2001 in so far as not already in force) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 17(2)**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with **ss. 28, 83(6)**); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; [S.I. 2000/3354](#), **art. 2**

[^{F82}40B Disqualification from driving: further provision.

- (1) If, but only if, the court is of the opinion that there has been wilful refusal or culpable neglect on the part of the liable person, it may—
 - (a) order him to be disqualified, for such period specified in the order but not exceeding two years as it thinks fit, from holding or obtaining a driving licence (a “disqualification order”); or
 - (b) make a disqualification order but suspend its operation until such time and on such conditions (if any) as it thinks just.
- (2) The court may not take action under both section 40 and this section.
- (3) A disqualification order must state the amount in respect of which it is made, which is to be the aggregate of—
 - (a) the amount mentioned in section 35(1), or so much of it as remains outstanding; and
 - (b) an amount (determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State) in respect of the costs of the application under section 39A.
- (4) A court which makes a disqualification order shall require the person to whom it relates to produce any driving licence held by him, and its counterpart (within the meaning of section 108(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988).

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (5) On an application by the Secretary of State or the liable person, the court—
- (a) may make an order substituting a shorter period of disqualification, or make an order revoking the disqualification order, if part of the amount referred to in subsection (3) (the “amount due”) is paid to any person authorised to receive it; and
 - (b) must make an order revoking the disqualification order if all of the amount due is so paid.
- (6) The Secretary of State may make representations to the court as to the amount which should be paid before it would be appropriate to make an order revoking the disqualification order under subsection (5)(a), and the person liable may reply to those representations.
- (7) The Secretary of State may make a further application under section 39A if the amount due has not been paid in full when the period of disqualification specified in the disqualification order expires.
- (8) Where a court—
- (a) makes a disqualification order;
 - (b) makes an order under subsection (5); or
 - (c) allows an appeal against a disqualification order,
- it shall send notice of that fact to the Secretary of State; and the notice shall contain such particulars and be sent in such manner and to such address as the Secretary of State may determine.
- (9) Where a court makes a disqualification order, it shall also send the driving licence and its counterpart, on their being produced to the court, to the Secretary of State at such address as he may determine.
- (10) Section 80 of the Magistrates’ Courts Act 1980 (application of money found on defaulter) shall apply in relation to a disqualification order under this section in relation to a liable person as it applies in relation to the enforcement of a sum mentioned in subsection (1) of that section.
- (11) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision in relation to disqualification orders corresponding to the provision he may make under section 40(11).
- (12) In the application to Scotland of this section—
- (a) in subsection (2) for “section 40” substitute “section 40A”;
 - (b) in subsection (3) for paragraph (a) substitute—
 - “(a) the appropriate amount under section 38;”;
 - (c) subsection (10) is omitted; and
 - (d) for subsection (11) substitute—
 - “(11) The power of the Court of Session by Act of Sederunt to regulate the procedure and practice in civil proceedings in the sheriff court shall include power to make, in relation to disqualification orders, provision corresponding to that which may be made by virtue of section 40A(8).”]

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

Textual Amendments

F82 S. 40B inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 2.4.2001 in so far as not already in force) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 16(3)**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with **ss. 28, 83(6)**); [S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2000/3354, art. 2](#)

41 Arrears of child support maintenance.

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) the Secretary of State is authorised under section 4, 6 or 7 to recover child support maintenance payable by an absent parent in accordance with a maintenance assessment; and
 - (b) the absent parent has failed to make one or more payments of child support maintenance due from him in accordance with that assessment.

[^{F83}(2) Where the Secretary of State recovers any such arrears he may, in such circumstances as may be prescribed and to such extent as may be prescribed, retain them if he is satisfied that the amount of any benefit paid to or in respect of the person with care of the child or children in question would have been less had the absent parent made the payment or payments of child support maintenance in question.

(2A) In determining for the purposes of subsection (2) whether the amount of any benefit paid would have been less at any time than the amount which was paid at that time, in a case where the maintenance assessment had effect from a date earlier than that on which it was made, the assessment shall be taken to have been in force at that time.]

- ^{F84}(3)
- ^{F84}(4)
- ^{F84}(5)

(6) Any sums retained by the Secretary of State by virtue of this section shall be paid by him into the Consolidated Fund.

Textual Amendments

F83 S. 41(2)(2A) substituted for s. 41(2) (1.10.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), s. 30(4), **Sch. 3 para. 11**; [S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 2](#)

F84 S. 41(3)-(5) repealed (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 18(1), 86(1)(a)(2)**, **Sch. 9 Pt. 1** (with s. 83(6)); [S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2003/192, art. 3, Sch.](#)

Commencement Information

I19 S. 41 wholly in force; s. 41 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 41(2)-(4) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.](#); s. 41 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

[^{F85}**41A Penalty payments.**

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the payment to him by non-resident parents who are in arrears with payments of child support maintenance of penalty payments determined in accordance with the regulations.
- (2) The amount of a penalty payment in respect of any week may not exceed 25% of the amount of child support maintenance payable for that week, but otherwise is to be determined by the Secretary of State.
- (3) The liability of a non-resident parent to make a penalty payment does not affect his liability to pay the arrears of child support maintenance concerned.
- (4) Regulations under subsection (1) may, in particular, make provision—
 - (a) as to the time at which a penalty payment is to be payable;
 - (b) for the Secretary of State to waive a penalty payment, or part of it.
- (5) The provisions of this Act with respect to—
 - (a) the collection of child support maintenance;
 - (b) the enforcement of an obligation to pay child support maintenance,apply equally (with any necessary modifications) to penalty payments payable by virtue of regulations under this section.
- (6) The Secretary of State shall pay penalty payments received by him into the Consolidated Fund.]

Textual Amendments

F85 S. 41A substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 18(2)**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with [ss. 28](#), 83(6)); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch. Pt. 1](#); [S.I. 2003/192](#), [art. 3](#), [Sch.](#) (note that Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), s. 22, which inserted s. 41A of this Act, was never brought into force)

[^{F86}**41B Repayment of overpaid child support maintenance.**

- (1) This section applies where it appears to the Secretary of State that an absent parent has made a payment by way of child support maintenance which amounts to an overpayment by him of that maintenance and that—
 - (a) it would not be possible for the absent parent to recover the amount of the overpayment by way of an adjustment of the amount payable under a maintenance assessment; or
 - (b) it would be inappropriate to rely on an adjustment of the amount payable under a maintenance assessment as the means of enabling the absent parent to recover the amount of the overpayment.

[This section also applies where the non-resident parent has made a voluntary payment
^{F87}(1A) and it appears to the Secretary of State—

- (a) that he is not liable to pay child support maintenance; or
- (b) that he is liable, but some or all of the payment amounts to an overpayment,

and, in a case falling within paragraph (b), it also appears to him that subsection (1) (a) or (b) applies.]

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (2) The Secretary of State may make such payment to the absent parent by way of reimbursement, or partial reimbursement, of the overpayment as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.
- (3) Where the Secretary of State has made a payment under this section he may, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, require the relevant person to pay to him the whole, or a specified proportion, of the amount of that payment.
- (4) Any such requirement shall be imposed by giving the relevant person a written demand for the amount which the Secretary of State wishes to recover from him.
- (5) Any sum which a person is required to pay to the Secretary of State under this section shall be recoverable from him by the Secretary of State as a debt due to the Crown.
- (6) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision in relation to any case in which—
 - (a) one or more overpayments of child support maintenance are being reimbursed to the Secretary of State by the relevant person; and
 - (b) child support maintenance has continued to be payable by the absent parent concerned to the person with care concerned, or again becomes so payable.
- [^{F88}(7) For the purposes of this section—
 - (a) a payment made by a person under a maintenance calculation which was not validly made; and
 - (b) a voluntary payment made in the circumstances set out in subsection (1A)(a), shall be treated as an overpayment of child support maintenance made by a non-resident parent.]
- (8) In this section “relevant person”, in relation to an overpayment, means the person with care to whom the overpayment was made.
- (9) Any sum recovered by the Secretary of State under this section shall be paid by him into the Consolidated Fund.]

Textual Amendments

- F86** S. 41B inserted (4.9.1995 for specified purposes, 1.10.1995 for specified purposes) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), [ss. 23, 30\(4\)](#); S.I. 1995/2302, [art. 2](#), [Sch. Pts. 1, 2](#)
- F87** S. 41B(1A) inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), [ss. 20\(3\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with [ss. 28, 83\(6\)](#)); S.I. 2000/2994, [art. 2](#), [Sch. Pt. 1](#); S.I. 2003/192, [art. 3](#), [Sch.](#)
- F88** S. 41B(7) substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), [ss. 20\(4\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with [ss. 28, 83\(6\)](#)); S.I. 2000/2994, [art. 2](#), [Sch. Pt. 1](#); S.I. 2003/192, [art. 3](#), [Sch.](#)

Special cases

42 Special cases.

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that in prescribed circumstances a case is to be treated as a special case for the purposes of this Act.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (2) Those regulations may, for example, provide for the following to be special cases—
 - (a) each parent of a child is an absent parent in relation to the child;
 - (b) there is more than one person who is a person with care in relation to the same child;
 - (c) there is more than one qualifying child in relation to the same absent parent but the person who is the person with care in relation to one of those children is not the person who is the person with care in relation to all of them;
 - (d) a person is an absent parent in relation to more than one child and the other parent of each of those children is not the same person;
 - (e) the person with care has care of more than one qualifying child and there is more than one absent parent in relation to those children;
 - (f) a qualifying child has his home in two or more separate households.
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision with respect to special cases.
- (4) Regulations made under subsection (3) may, in particular—
 - (a) modify any provision made by or under this Act, in its application to any special case or any special case falling within a prescribed category;
 - (b) make new provision for any such case; or
 - (c) provide for any prescribed provision made by or under this Act not to apply to any such case.

[^{F89} 43 Recovery of child support maintenance by deduction from benefit.

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) a non-resident parent is liable to pay a flat rate of child support maintenance (or would be so liable but for a variation having been agreed to), and that rate applies (or would have applied) because he falls within paragraph 4(1)(b) or (c) or 4(2) of Schedule 1; and
 - (b) such conditions as may be prescribed for the purposes of this section are satisfied.
- (2) The power of the Secretary of State to make regulations under section 5 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 by virtue of subsection (1)(p) (deductions from benefits) may be exercised in relation to cases to which this section applies with a view to securing that payments in respect of child support maintenance are made or that arrears of child support maintenance are recovered.
- (3) For the purposes of this section, the benefits to which section 5 of the 1992 Act applies are to be taken as including war disablement pensions and war widows' pensions (within the meaning of section 150 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (interpretation)).]

Textual Amendments

F89 S. 43 substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 3.3.2003 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 21**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with **ss. 28**, 83(6)); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; [S.I. 2003/192](#), art. 3, Sch.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

Jurisdiction

44 Jurisdiction.

- (1) [^{F90}The Secretary of State] shall have jurisdiction to make a maintenance assessment with respect to a person who is—
- (a) a person with care;
 - (b) an absent parent; or
 - (c) a qualifying child,
- only if that person is habitually resident in the United Kingdom.
- (2) Where the person with care is not an individual, subsection (1) shall have effect as if paragraph (a) were omitted.
- [^{F91}(2A) A non-resident parent falls within this subsection if he is not habitually resident in the United Kingdom, but is—
- (a) employed in the civil service of the Crown, including Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service and Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service;
 - (b) a member of the naval, military or air forces of the Crown, including any person employed by an association established for the purposes of Part XI of the Reserve Forces Act 1996;
 - (c) employed by a company of a prescribed description registered under the Companies Act 1985 in England and Wales or in Scotland, or under the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986; or
 - (d) employed by a body of a prescribed description.]
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the cancellation of any maintenance assessment where—
- (a) the person with care, absent parent or qualifying child with respect to whom it was made ceases to be habitually resident in the United Kingdom;
 - (b) in a case falling within subsection (2), the absent parent or qualifying child with respect to whom it was made ceases to be habitually resident in the United Kingdom; or
 - (c) in such circumstances as may be prescribed, a maintenance order of a prescribed kind is made with respect to any qualifying child with respect to whom the maintenance assessment was made.

Textual Amendments

F90 Words in s. 44(1) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 41; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)

F91 S. 44(2A) inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes, 31.1.2001 in so far as not already in force) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\), ss. 22\(3\), 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\) \(with ss. 28, 83\(6\)\); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1; S.I. 2000/3354, art. 2\(1\)\(a\)](#)

Commencement Information

I20 S. 44 wholly in force; s. 44 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 44(3) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.](#); s. 44 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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45 Jurisdiction of courts in certain proceedings under this Act.

- (1) The Lord Chancellor or, in relation to Scotland, the Lord Advocate may by order make such provision as he considers necessary to secure that appeals, or such class of appeals as may be specified in the order—
 - (a) shall be made to a court instead of being made to [^{F92}an appeal tribunal]; or
 - (b) shall be so made in such circumstances as may be so specified.
- (2) In subsection (1), “court” means—
 - (a) in relation to England and Wales and subject to any provision made under Schedule 11 to the ^{M19}Children Act 1989 (jurisdiction of courts with respect to certain proceedings relating to children) the High Court, a county court or a magistrates’ court; and
 - (b) in relation to Scotland, the Court of Session or the sheriff.
- (3) Schedule 11 to the Act of 1989 shall be amended in accordance with subsections (4) and (5).
- (4) The following sub-paragraph shall be inserted in paragraph 1, after sub-paragraph (2)
—

“(2A) Sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) shall also apply in relation to proceedings—

 - (a) under section 27 of the Child Support Act 1991 (reference to court for declaration of parentage); or
 - (b) which are to be dealt with in accordance with an order made under section 45 of that Act (jurisdiction of courts in certain proceedings under that Act)”.
- (5) In paragraphs 1(3) and 2(3), the following shall be inserted after “Act 1976”—

“(bb) section 20 (appeals) or 27 (reference to court for declaration of parentage) of the Child Support Act 1991;”.
- (6) Where the effect of any order under subsection (1) is that there are no longer any appeals which fall to be dealt with by [^{F93}appeal tribunals], the Lord Chancellor after consultation with the Lord Advocate may by order provide for the abolition of those tribunals.
- (7) Any order under subsection (1) or (6) may make—
 - (a) such modifications of any provision of this Act or of any other enactment; and
 - (b) such transitional provision,as the Minister making the order considers appropriate in consequence of any provision made by the order.

Textual Amendments

- F92** Words in s. 45(1) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 42\(1\)](#); S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)
- F93** Words in s. 45(6) substituted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 42\(2\)](#); S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iii)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C42** S. 45: transfer of functions (19.5.1999) by [The Transfer of Functions \(Lord Advocate and Secretary of State\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/678\), arts. 1, 2\(1\), Sch.](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- C43** S. 45(1)(6): transfer of functions in relation to Scotland (1.7.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Transfer of Functions to the Scottish Ministers etc.\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1750\)](#), arts. 1(1), 2, **Sch. 1** (with art. 7)
- C44** S. 45(6) functions treated as exercisable in Scotland (30.6.1999) by [The Scotland Act 1998 \(Functions Exercisable in or as Regards Scotland\) Order 1999 \(S.I. 1999/1748\)](#), arts. 1, 3, **Sch. 1 para. 12**

Marginal Citations

M19 1989 c. 41.

Miscellaneous and supplemental

[^{F94}46] **Reduced benefit decisions.**

- (1) This section applies where any person (“the parent”)—
 - (a) has made a request under section 6(5);
 - (b) fails to comply with any regulation made under section 6(7); or
 - (c) having been treated as having applied for a maintenance calculation under section 6, refuses to take a scientific test (within the meaning of section 27A).
- (2) The Secretary of State may serve written notice on the parent requiring her, before the end of a specified period—
 - (a) in a subsection (1)(a) case, to give him her reasons for making the request;
 - (b) in a subsection (1)(b) case, to give him her reasons for failing to do so; or
 - (c) in a subsection (1)(c) case, to give him her reasons for her refusal.
- (3) When the specified period has expired, the Secretary of State shall consider whether, having regard to any reasons given by the parent, there are reasonable grounds for believing that—
 - (a) in a subsection (1)(a) case, if the Secretary of State were to do what is mentioned in section 6(3);
 - (b) in a subsection (1)(b) case, if she were to be required to comply; or
 - (c) in a subsection (1)(c) case, if she took the scientific test,
 there would be a risk of her, or of any children living with her, suffering harm or undue distress as a result of his taking such action, or her complying or taking the test.
- (4) If the Secretary of State considers that there are such reasonable grounds, he shall—
 - (a) take no further action under this section in relation to the request, the failure or the refusal in question; and
 - (b) notify the parent, in writing, accordingly.
- (5) If the Secretary of State considers that there are no such reasonable grounds, he may, except in prescribed circumstances, make a reduced benefit decision with respect to the parent.
- (6) In a subsection (1)(a) case, the Secretary of State may from time to time serve written notice on the parent requiring her, before the end of a specified period—
 - (a) to state whether her request under section 6(5) still stands; and
 - (b) if so, to give him her reasons for maintaining her request,
 and subsections (3) to (5) have effect in relation to such a notice and any response to it as they have effect in relation to a notice under subsection (2)(a) and any response to it.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (7) Where the Secretary of State makes a reduced benefit decision he must send a copy of it to the parent.
- (8) A reduced benefit decision is to take effect on such date as may be specified in the decision.
- (9) Reasons given in response to a notice under subsection (2) or (6) need not be given in writing unless the Secretary of State directs in any case that they must.
- (10) In this section—
 - (a) “comply” means to comply with the requirement or with the regulation in question; and “complied” and “complying” are to be construed accordingly;
 - (b) “reduced benefit decision” means a decision that the amount payable by way of any relevant benefit to, or in respect of, the parent concerned be reduced by such amount, and for such period, as may be prescribed;
 - (c) “relevant benefit” means income support or an income-based jobseeker’s allowance or any other benefit of a kind prescribed for the purposes of section 6; and
 - (d) “specified”, in relation to a notice served under this section, means specified in the notice; and the period to be specified is to be determined in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State.]

Textual Amendments

F94 S. 46 substituted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), [ss. 19, 86\(1\)\(a\)\(2\)](#) (with [ss. 28, 83\(6\)](#)); [S.I. 2000/2994](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch. Pt. 1](#)

[^{F95}46A Finality of decisions

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, any decision of the Secretary of State or an appeal tribunal made in accordance with the foregoing provisions of this Act shall be final.
- (2) If and to the extent that regulations so provide, any finding of fact or other determination embodied in or necessary to such a decision, or on which such a decision is based, shall be conclusive for the purposes of—
 - (a) further such decisions;
 - (b) decisions made in accordance with sections 8 to 16 of the Social Security Act 1998, or with regulations under section 11 of that Act; and
 - (c) decisions made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979.

Textual Amendments

F95 Ss. 46A, 46B inserted (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), [s. 87\(2\)](#), [Sch. 7 para. 44](#); [S.I. 1999/528](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#), [Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510](#), [art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)

46B Matters arising as respects decisions

- (1) Regulations may make provision as respects matters arising pending—
 - (a) any decision of the Secretary of State under section 11, 12 or 17;

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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- (b) any decision of an appeal tribunal under section 20; or
 - (c) any decision of a Child Support Commissioner under section 24.
- (2) Regulations may also make provision as respects matters arising out of the revision under section 16, or on appeal, of any such decision as is mentioned in subsection (1).
- (3) Any reference in this section to section 16, 17 or 20 includes a reference to that section as extended by Schedule 4C.]

Textual Amendments

F95 Ss. 46A, 46B inserted (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\)](#), s. 87(2), [Sch. 7 para. 44](#); S.I. 1999/528, art. 2(a), [Sch.](#); S.I. 1999/1510, [art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)

47 Fees.

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for the payment, by the absent parent or the person with care (or by both), of such fees as may be prescribed in cases where the Secretary of State takes any action under section 4 or 6.
- (2) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for the payment, by the absent parent, the person with care or the child concerned (or by any or all of them), of such fees as may be prescribed in cases where the Secretary of State takes any action under section 7.
- (3) Regulations made under this section—
- (a) may require any information which is needed for the purpose of determining the amount of any such fee to be furnished, in accordance with the regulations, by such person as may be prescribed;
 - (b) shall provide that no such fees shall be payable by any person to or in respect of whom income support, [^{F96}an income-based jobseeker's allowance,][^{F97}working families' tax credit] or any other benefit of a prescribed kind is paid; and
 - (c) may, in particular, make provision with respect to the recovery by the Secretary of State of any fees payable under the regulations.
- [^{F98}(4) The provisions of this Act with respect to—
- (a) the collection of child support maintenance;
 - (b) the enforcement of any obligation to pay child support maintenance,
- shall apply equally (with any necessary modifications) to fees payable by virtue of regulations made under this section.]

Textual Amendments

F96 Words in s. 47(3) inserted (7.10.1996) by [Jobseekers Act 1995 \(c. 18\)](#), s. 41(2), [Sch. 2 para. 20\(5\)](#); S.I. 1996/2208, art. 2(b)

F97 Words in s. 47(3)(b) substituted (5.10.1999) by [Tax Credits Act 1999 \(c. 10\)](#), s. 20(2), [Sch. 1 paras. 1\(a\), 6\(f\)\(i\)](#)

F98 S. 47(4) inserted (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), s. 86(1)(a)(2), [Sch. 3 para. 11\(18\)](#) (with s. 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, [Sch. Pt. 1](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

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Commencement Information

I21 S. 47 wholly in force at 17.6.1992 see s. 58(2) and [S.I. 1992/1431](#), art. 2, [Sch.](#)

48 Right of audience.

- (1) Any [^{F99}officer of the Secretary of State who is authorised] by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section shall have, in relation to any proceedings under this Act before a magistrates' court, a right of audience and the right to conduct litigation.
- (2) In this section “right of audience” and “right to conduct litigation” have the same meaning as in section 119 of the ^{M20}Courts and Legal Services Act 1990.

Textual Amendments

F99 Words in s. 48(1) substituted (4.9.1995) by [Child Support Act 1995 \(c. 34\)](#), s. 30(4), [Sch. 3 para. 14](#); [S.I. 1995/2302](#), art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

Marginal Citations

M20 1990 c. 41.

49 Right of audience: Scotland.

In relation to any proceedings before the sheriff under any provision of this Act, the power conferred on the Court of Session by section 32 of the ^{M21}Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 (power of Court of Session to regulate civil procedure in sheriff court) shall extend to the making of rules permitting a party to such proceedings, in such circumstances as may be specified in the rules, to be represented by a person who is neither an advocate nor a solicitor.

Marginal Citations

M21 1971 c. 58.

50 Unauthorised disclosure of information.

- (1) Any person who is, or has been, employed in employment to which this section applies is guilty of an offence if, without lawful authority, he discloses any information which—
 - (a) was acquired by him in the course of that employment; and
 - (b) relates to a particular person.
- (2) It is not an offence under this section—
 - (a) to disclose information in the form of a summary or collection of information so framed as not to enable information relating to any particular person to be ascertained from it; or
 - (b) to disclose information which has previously been disclosed to the public with lawful authority.
- (3) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section to prove that at the time of the alleged offence—

Status: Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation: Child Support Act 1991 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 August 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (a) he believed that he was making the disclosure in question with lawful authority and had no reasonable cause to believe otherwise; or
 - (b) he believed that the information in question had previously been disclosed to the public with lawful authority and had no reasonable cause to believe otherwise.
- (4) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable—
- (a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both; or
 - (b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or both.
- (5) This section applies to employment as—
- (a) the Chief Child Support Officer;
 - (b) any other child support officer;
 - (c) any clerk to, or other officer of, [^{F100}an appeal tribunal or] a child support appeal tribunal;
 - (d) any member of the staff of such a tribunal;
 - (e) a civil servant in connection with the carrying out of any functions under this Act,
- and to employment of any other kind which is prescribed for the purposes of this section.
- (6) For the purposes of this section a disclosure is to be regarded as made with lawful authority if, and only if, it is made—
- (a) by a civil servant in accordance with his official duty; or
 - (b) by any other person either—
 - (i) for the purposes of the function in the exercise of which he holds the information and without contravening any restriction duly imposed by the responsible person; or
 - (ii) to, or in accordance with an authorisation duly given by, the responsible person;
 - (c) in accordance with any enactment or order of a court;
 - (d) for the purpose of instituting, or otherwise for the purposes of, any proceedings before a court or before any tribunal or other body or person mentioned in this Act; or
 - (e) with the consent of the appropriate person.
- (7) “The responsible person” means—
- (a) the Lord Chancellor;
 - (b) the Secretary of State;
 - (c) any person authorised by the Lord Chancellor, or Secretary of State, for the purposes of this subsection; or
 - (d) any other prescribed person, or person falling within a prescribed category.
- (8) “The appropriate person” means the person to whom the information in question relates, except that if the affairs of that person are being dealt with—
- (a) under a power of attorney;
 - (b) by a receiver appointed under section 99 of the ^{M22}Mental Health Act 1983;
 - (c) by a Scottish mental health custodian, that is to say—

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- (i) a curator bonis, tutor or judicial factor; or
 - (ii) the managers of a hospital acting on behalf of that person under section 94 of the ^{M23}Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; or
- (d) by a mental health appointee, that is to say—
- (i) a person directed or authorised as mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) of rule 41(1) of the ^{M24}Court of Protection Rules 1984; or
 - (ii) a receiver ad interim appointed under sub-paragraph (b) of that rule;
- the appropriate person is the attorney, receiver, custodian or appointee (as the case may be) or, in a case falling within paragraph (a), the person to whom the information relates.

Textual Amendments

F100 Words in s. 50(5)(c) inserted (1.6.1999) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 45](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(iii\)](#)

Commencement Information

I22 S. 50 wholly in force; s. 50 not in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 50(5)(7)(d) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431, art. 2, Sch.](#); s. 50 in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644, art. 2](#)

Marginal Citations

M22 [1983 c. 20.](#)
M23 [1984 c. 36.](#)
M24 [S.I. 1984/2035.](#)

51 Supplementary powers to make regulations.

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such incidental, supplemental and transitional provision as he considers appropriate in connection with any provision made by or under this Act.
- (2) The regulations may, in particular, make provision—
 - (a) as to the procedure to be followed with respect to—
 - (i) the making of applications for maintenance assessments;
 - (ii) the making, cancellation or refusal to make maintenance assessments;
 - ^{F101}(iii) the making of decisions under section 16 or 17;]
 - (b) extending the categories of case to which [^{F102}Schedule 4C] applies;
 - (c) as to the date on which an application for a maintenance assessment is to be treated as having been made;
 - (d) for attributing payments made under maintenance assessments to the payment of arrears;
 - (e) for the adjustment, for the purpose of taking account of the retrospective effect of a maintenance assessment, of amounts payable under the assessment;
 - (f) for the adjustment, for the purpose of taking account of over-payments or under-payments of child support maintenance, of amounts payable under a maintenance assessment;
 - (g) as to the evidence which is to be required in connection with such matters as may be prescribed;

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- (h) as to the circumstances in which any official record or certificate is to be conclusive (or in Scotland, sufficient) evidence;
 - (i) with respect to the giving of notices or other documents;
 - (j) for the rounding up or down of any amounts calculated, estimated or otherwise arrived at in applying any provision made by or under this Act.
- (3) No power to make regulations conferred by any other provision of this Act shall be taken to limit the powers given to the Secretary of State by this section.

Textual Amendments

F101 S. 51(2)(a)(iii) substituted (16.11.1998) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 46\(a\)](#); [S.I. 1998/2780, art. 2](#) (with art. 3)

F102 Words in s. 51(2)(b) substituted (4.3.1999 for specified purposes, 1.6.1999 in so far as not already in force) by [Social Security Act 1998 \(c. 14\), s. 87\(2\), Sch. 7 para. 46\(b\)](#); [S.I. 1999/528, art. 2\(a\), Sch.](#); [S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2\(g\)\(v\)](#)

52 Regulations and orders.

- (1) Any power conferred on the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Advocate or the Secretary of State by this Act to make regulations or orders (other than a deduction from earnings order) shall be exercisable by statutory instrument.
- [^{F103}(2) No statutory instrument containing (whether alone or with other provisions) regulations made under—
- (a) section 6(1), 12(4) (so far as the regulations make provision for the default rate of child support maintenance mentioned in section 12(5)(b)), 28C(2)(b), 28F(2)(b), 30(5A), 41(2), 41A, 41B(6), 43(1), 44(2A)(d), 46 or 47;
 - (b) paragraph 3(2) or 10A(1) of Part I of Schedule 1; or
 - (c) Schedule 4B,
- or an order made under section 45(1) or (6), shall be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.
- (2A) No statutory instrument containing (whether alone or with other provisions) the first set of regulations made under paragraph 10(1) of Part I of Schedule 1 as substituted by section 1(3) of the Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 shall be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.]
- (3) Any other statutory instrument made under this Act (except an order made under section 58(2)) shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.
- (4) Any power of a kind mentioned in subsection (1) may be exercised—
- (a) in relation to all cases to which it extends, in relation to those cases but subject to specified exceptions or in relation to any specified cases or classes of case;
 - (b) so as to make, as respects the cases in relation to which it is exercised—
 - (i) the full provision to which it extends or any lesser provision (whether by way of exception or otherwise);

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- (ii) the same provision for all cases, different provision for different cases or classes of case or different provision as respects the same case or class of case but for different purposes of this Act;
 - (iii) provision which is either unconditional or is subject to any specified condition;
- (c) so to provide for a person to exercise a discretion in dealing with any matter.

Textual Amendments

F103 S. 52(2)(2A) substituted for s. 52(2) (10.11.2000 for specified purposes) by [Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000 \(c. 19\)](#), **ss. 25**, 86(1)(a)(2) (with **ss. 28**, 83(6)); S.I. 2000/2994, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

53 Financial provisions.

Any expenses of the Lord Chancellor or the Secretary of State under this Act shall be payable out of money provided by Parliament.

54 Interpretation.

In this Act—

“absent parent”, has the meaning given in section 3(2);

F104

[^{F105}“appeal tribunal” means an appeal tribunal constituted under Chapter I of Part I of the Social Security Act 1998;]

[^{F106}“application for a departure direction” means an application under section 28A;]

“assessable income” has the meaning given in paragraph 5 of Schedule 1;

“benefit Acts” means the [^{F107}Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 and the Social Security Administration Act 1992];

F104

F104

“child benefit” has the same meaning as in the ^{M25}Child Benefit Act 1975;

F104

“child support maintenance” has the meaning given in section 3(6);

F104

[^{F106}“current assessment”, in relation to an application for a departure direction, means (subject to any regulations made under paragraph 10 of Schedule 4A) the maintenance assessment with respect to which the application is made;]

“deduction from earnings order” has the meaning given in section 31(2);

[^{F106}“departure direction” has the meaning given in section 28A;]

“disability living allowance” has the same meaning as in the [^{F107}benefit Acts];

“[^{F108}working families’ tax credit]” has the same meaning as in the benefit Acts;

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“general qualification” shall be construed in accordance with section 71 of the ^{M26}Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 (qualification for judicial appointments);

[^{F109}“income-based jobseeker’s allowance” has the same meaning as in the Jobseekers Act 1995;]

“income support” has the same meaning as in the benefit Acts;

“interim maintenance assessment” has the meaning given in section 12;

“liability order” has the meaning given in section 33(2);

“maintenance agreement” has the meaning given in section 9(1);

“maintenance assessment” means an assessment of maintenance made under this Act and, except in prescribed circumstances, includes an interim maintenance assessment;

“maintenance order” has the meaning given in section 8(11);

“maintenance requirement” means the amount calculated in accordance with paragraph 1 of Schedule 1;

“parent”, in relation to any child, means any person who is in law the mother or father of the child;

[^{F106}“parent with care” means a person who is, in relation to a child, both a parent and a person with care.]

[^{F110}“parental responsibility”, in the application of this Act—

(a) to England and Wales, has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989; and

(b) to Scotland, shall be construed as a reference to “parental responsibilities” within the meaning given by section 1(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;]

^{F111}

“person with care” has the meaning given in section 3(3);

“prescribed” means prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State;

“qualifying child” has the meaning given in section 3(1);

Textual Amendments

F104 Words in s. 54 repealed (1.6.1999 for specified purposes, 29.11.1999 for specified purposes) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), Sch. 7 para. 47(b), **Sch. 8**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iv); S.I. 1999/3178, art. 2, Sch. 1 (with arts. 2(2), 4)

F105 Words in s. 54 inserted (1.6.1999) by Social Security Act 1998 (c. 14), s. 87(2), **Sch. 7 para. 47(a)**; S.I. 1999/1510, art. 2(g)(iv)

F106 Words in s. 54 inserted (4.9.1995) by Child Support Act 1995 (c. 34), s. 30(4), **Sch. 3 para. 16**; S.I. 1995/2302, art. 2, Sch. Pt. 1

F107 Words in s. 54 substituted (1.7.1992) by Social Security (Consequential Provisions) Act 1992 (c. 6), s. 4, **Sch. 2 para. 114(a)(b)**

F108 Words in s. 54 substituted (5.10.1999) by Tax Credits Act 1999 (c. 10), s. 20(2), Sch. 1 paras. 1(a), **6(f)(ii)**

F109 Words in s. 54 inserted (7.10.1996) by Jobseekers Act 1995 (c. 18), s. 41(2), **Sch. 2 para. 20(6)**; S.I. 1996/2208, art. 2(b)

F110 Words in s. 54 substituted (1.11.1996) by Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (c. 36), s. 105(1)(b), **Sch. 4 para. 52(4)(a)**; S.I. 1996/2203, art. 3(3), Sch. (with arts. 4-7)

F111 Words in s. 54 repealed (1.11.1996) by Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (c. 36), s. 105(1)(b), Sch. 4 para. 52(4)(b), **Sch. 5**; S.I. 1996/2203, art. 3(3), Sch. (with arts. 4-7)

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Marginal Citations

M25 1975 c. 61.

M26 1990 c. 41.

55 Meaning of “child”.

- (1) For the purposes of this Act a person is a child if—
 - (a) he is under the age of 16;
 - (b) he is under the age of 19 and receiving full-time education (which is not advanced education)—
 - (i) by attendance at a recognised educational establishment; or
 - (ii) elsewhere, if the education is recognised by the Secretary of State; or
 - (c) he does not fall within paragraph (a) or (b) but—
 - (i) he is under the age of 18, and
 - (ii) prescribed conditions are satisfied with respect to him.
- (2) A person is not a child for the purposes of this Act if he—
 - (a) is or has been married;
 - (b) has celebrated a marriage which is void; or
 - (c) has celebrated a marriage in respect of which a decree of nullity has been granted.
- (3) In this section—

“advanced education” means education of a prescribed description; and

“recognised educational establishment” means an establishment recognised by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section as being, or as comparable to, a university, college or school.
- (4) Where a person has reached the age of 16, the Secretary of State may recognise education provided for him otherwise than at a recognised educational establishment only if the Secretary of State is satisfied that education was being so provided for him immediately before he reached the age of 16.
- (5) The Secretary of State may provide that in prescribed circumstances education is or is not to be treated for the purposes of this section as being full-time.
- (6) In determining whether a person falls within subsection (1)(b), no account shall be taken of such interruptions in his education as may be prescribed.
- (7) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that a person who ceases to fall within subsection (1) shall be treated as continuing to fall within that subsection for a prescribed period.
- (8) No person shall be treated as continuing to fall within subsection (1) by virtue of regulations made under subsection (7) after the end of the week in which he reaches the age of 19.

56 Corresponding provision for and co-ordination with Northern Ireland.

- (1) An Order in Council made under paragraph 1(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the ^{M27}Northern Ireland Act 1974 which contains a statement that it is made only for purposes

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corresponding to those of the provisions of this Act, other than provisions which relate to the appointment of Child Support Commissioners for Northern Ireland—

- (a) shall not be subject to sub-paragraphs (4) and (5) of paragraph 1 of that Schedule (affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament); but
- (b) shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

F112(2)

F112(3)

F112(4)

Extent Information

E1 S. 56 with the exception of s. 56(1) does not extend to Northern Ireland see s. 58(11)

Textual Amendments

F112 S. 56(2)-(4) repealed (2.12.1999) by [Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(c. 47\)](#), ss. 87(8)(c), 101(3), [Sch. 15](#) (with s. 95, [Sch. 14](#)); [S.I. 1999/3209](#), art. 2, [Sch.](#)

Commencement Information

I23 S. 56 wholly in force; s. 56(1) in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 56(2)-(4) in force at 17.6.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), art. 2, [Sch.](#)

Marginal Citations

M27 [1974 c. 28](#).

57 Application to Crown.

- (1) The power of the Secretary of State to make regulations under section 14 requiring prescribed persons to furnish information may be exercised so as to require information to be furnished by persons employed in the service of the Crown or otherwise in the discharge of Crown functions.
- (2) In such circumstances, and subject to such conditions, as may be prescribed, an inspector appointed under section 15 may enter any Crown premises for the purpose of exercising any powers conferred on him by that section.
- (3) Where such an inspector duly enters any Crown premises for those purposes, section 15 shall apply in relation to persons employed in the service of the Crown or otherwise in the discharge of Crown functions as it applies in relation to other persons.
- (4) Where a liable person is in the employment of the Crown, a deduction from earnings order may be made under section 31 in relation to that person; but in such a case subsection (8) of section 32 shall apply only in relation to the failure of that person to comply with any requirement imposed on him by regulations made under section 32.

58 Short title, commencement and extent, etc.

- (1) This Act may be cited as the Child Support Act 1991.

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- (2) Section 56(1) and subsections (1) to (11) and (14) of this section shall come into force on the passing of this Act but otherwise this Act shall come into force on such date as may be appointed by order made by the Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State or Lord Advocate, or by any of them acting jointly.
 - (3) Different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act and for different purposes (including, in particular, for different cases or categories of case).
 - (4) An order under subsection (2) may make such supplemental, incidental or transitional provision as appears to the person making the order to be necessary or expedient in connection with the provisions brought into force by the order, including such adaptations or modifications of—
 - (a) the provisions so brought into force;
 - (b) any provisions of this Act then in force; or
 - (c) any provision of any other enactment,as appear to him to be necessary or expedient.
 - (5) Different provision may be made by virtue of subsection (4) with respect to different periods.
 - (6) Any provision made by virtue of subsection (4) may, in particular, include provision for—
 - (a) the enforcement of a maintenance assessment (including the collection of sums payable under the assessment) as if the assessment were a court order of a prescribed kind;
 - (b) the registration of maintenance assessments with the appropriate court in connection with any provision of a kind mentioned in paragraph (a);
 - (c) the variation, on application made to a court, of the provisions of a maintenance assessment relating to the method of making payments fixed by the assessment or the intervals at which such payments are to be made;
 - (d) a maintenance assessment, or an order of a prescribed kind relating to one or more children, to be deemed, in prescribed circumstances, to have been validly made for all purposes or for such purposes as may be prescribed.
- In paragraph (c) “court” includes a single justice.
- (7) The Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State or the Lord Advocate may by order make such amendments or repeals in, or such modifications of, such enactments as may be specified in the order, as appear to him to be necessary or expedient in consequence of any provision made by or under this Act (including any provision made by virtue of subsection (4)).
 - (8) This Act shall, in its application to the Isles of Scilly, have effect subject to such exceptions, adaptations and modifications as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe.
 - (9) Sections 27, 35 and 48 and paragraph 7 of Schedule 5 do not extend to Scotland.
 - (10) Sections 7, 28 and 49 extend only to Scotland.
 - (11) With the exception of sections 23 and 56(1), subsections (1) to (3) of this section and Schedules 2 and 4, and (in so far as it amends any enactment extending to Northern Ireland) Schedule 5, this Act does not extend to Northern Ireland.

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- (12) Until Schedule 1 to the ^{M28}Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Act 1991 comes into force, paragraph 1(1) of Schedule 3 shall have effect with the omission of the words “and disability appeal tribunals” and the insertion, after “social security appeal tribunals”, of the word “and”.
- (13) The consequential amendments set out in Schedule 5 shall have effect.
- (14) In Schedule 1 to the ^{M29}Children Act 1989 (financial provision for children), paragraph 2(6)(b) (which is spent) is hereby repealed.

Subordinate Legislation Made

- P1** S. 58(2): 17.6.1992 appointed for specified provisions and purposes by [S.I. 1992/1431](#), [art. 2](#), [Sch.](#)
S. 58: 1.9.1992 appointed for specified provisions by [S.I. 1992/1938](#), [art. 2](#)
S. 58(2)-(6): 5.4.1993 appointed for specified provisions by [S.I. 1992/2644](#), [art. 2](#) (with transitional provisions in [art. 3](#), [Sch.](#))

Commencement Information

- I24** S. 58 partly in force; s. 58(1)-(11)(14) wholly in force at Royal Assent see s. 58(2); s. 58(13) so far as it relates to Sch. 5 paras. 1-4 in force at 1.9.1992 by [S.I. 1992/1938](#), [art. 2](#); s. 58(13) in force in so far as not already in force at 5.4.1993 by [S.I. 1992/2644](#), [art. 2](#)

Marginal Citations

- M28** 1991 c. 21.
M29 1989 c. 41.

Status:

Point in time view as at 01/01/2001.

Changes to legislation:

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