



## Refusal to pay maintenance is a form of child abuse.

Today is Father's Day. Whilst the media, and all high street shops, celebrate men, we'd like to raise the issue of financial abuse of children. We want to talk about all the children in the UK currently living in poverty because their fathers, and it is overwhelmingly men, refuse to pay child maintenance. A report released this week by the single parent [organisation Gingerbread](#) found that there is **£4 BILLION** pounds in outstanding arrears and that the DWP estimates that only £467 million pounds of this will ever be recovered. The governments move from the Child Support Agency to the Child Maintenance Service (which charges women for the privilege of opening a file) has seen only 53% of maintenance in the new system paid.

Shamefully, as [Polly Toynbee has written in the Guardian](#), the CSA is currently writing to mothers to ask them to 'forgive the debt' - as though the primary caregivers of children, who are overwhelmingly women, can neglect to pay rent, council tax and the credit card debts they rack up buying groceries knowing these debts will be 'forgiven'.

Nearly 1/2 of single parent families live below the poverty line. Many because father's refuse to pay maintenance or pay so little by fiddling the system that it isn't worth paying £20 (the current charge by the CMS).

We need to start calling the refusal to pay maintenance what it really is: financial child abuse. Forcing your children to live in poverty because you cannot be bothered to support them or refusing to punish the mother are not the signs of 'good fathers'. It is the hallmark of an abusive father.

There is a quote bandied about in discussions of child contact that says 'children aren't pay per view', as though children were nothing more than a possession to be passed about. As with Women's Aid campaign, Safe Contact Saves Lives, we need to stop talking about children as possessions and start talking about children's rights.

Children have the right to live free from violence.

Children have the right to live outwith poverty.

The erasure of men's responsibility for their children, supported by government policy, is an absolute disgrace. Let's celebrate Father's Day by standing up for all the children living in poverty and saying No More.

[You can read the full report by Gingerbread here.](#)