



WE Party Conference

Kettering 7 – 9 September 2018

Title: Writing off Historic Child Support Arrears

Proposed by: WE Bristol and WE Bath and supported by Margaret Kerbey, WEP Equal Parenting and Caregiving Committee

Proposer of the motion: Joanna Archer

Type of motion: Policy

Motion text:

- 1 The Women's Equality Party notes that the Westminster Government proposes to write off Historic
2 Child Support Arrears, in order to reduce the cost of maintaining their records.
- 3 These arrears have accrued over decades, yet the Enforcement Powers that Parliament gave the
4 Westminster Government over a decade ago have still not been commenced by Secondary
5 Legislation.
- 6 Existing Child Support Law prevents the debtee from enforcing the debt through the courts
7 themselves.
- 8 The Women's Equality Party calls upon the Westminster Government to:
- 9 1. Pay all Historic Child Support Arrears to debtees directly and in full.
- 10 2. Use their existing powers to enforce the debt and reimburse the Tax Payer.
- 11 3. Where the debt is a result of a decision by the First Tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement
12 Chamber), give debtees the option to enforce debts through the courts in future.
- 13 Furthermore, WE call upon the Government to invest in Public Service Campaigns in order to
14 change the prevailing culture of Child Support Avoidance.

Motion rationale:

- 15 Of the £3.7bn of outstanding debt, £2.5bn is owed to parents – equating to approximately 970,000
16 cases. Debtees are predominantly women, who may have fallen into debt themselves in order to
17 provide for their children the resources that the 'Non-Resident Parent' (NRP) has not.
- 18 Some of this debt is over a decade old and yet no interest is applied. For comparison, the rate of
19 interest on Student Loans is up to 6.1% and debts to the government accrue interest at the
20 Statutory Rate of 8%.
- 21 The Government admits that they have 'unreliable data' for 'lots' of parents (see para.17*) and so



22 cannot guarantee that all those affected will be informed.

23 While the outstanding arrears may appear small, their relative worth to the debtors themselves is
24 much greater and represent years of anguish, even sustained financial abuse at the hands of former
25 partners. Indeed, some perpetrators have been tens of thousands of pounds in debt for decades,
26 with impunity.

27 The Government's proposal is an insult to everyone who has shouldered the bulk of the
28 responsibility for their children entirely on their own, and sends an unambiguous message to
29 recalcitrant NRPs that, having strung the process out for years they will now be rewarded and
30 relieved, retrospectively, of all financial responsibility for their children.

31 This is categorically NOT 'Shared Parenting', which is a key tenet of the Women's Equality Party.

References:

*'Child Maintenance: A New Compliance and Arrears Strategy – Public Consultation', (Dec 2017).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667033/child-maintenance-compliance-arrears-consultation.pdf