

Dear Mr Doyle,

The Un-married and Separated Parents of Ireland, a voluntary organisation would like to take the opportunity to respond to the article which appeared in the Evening Herald 25 January 2010.

Ahern targets dads dodging child payments.

We as a group have highlighted to the Department of Social and Family Affairs that they are not allowed to continue with the practice of the Maintenance recovery in it's present form.

Basically if a Court orders a Father to pay maintenance to a Wife or Partner.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs are paying that person Lone Parent's Benefit the amount of €19-80 in respect of each Child.

The Maintenance Recovery Section should only be able to seek the recovery of €19-80.

The Department seek anything from €75-00 to €150-00 as has been witnessed by many Parents.

If a Court Order is for that Father to pay the Mother €150-00 in maintenance payments.

IF he ceases to pay that to his Ex Partner or Wife but instead he sends it to the Maintenance Recovery section.

They Keep it and don't forward the difference over and above the €19-80's that they have paid out.

If the Parent does not pay his maintenance directly to their Ex Spouse or Partner they are in Contempt of Court and can be Jailed.

Also the Maintenance Recovery section are in fact in breach of the In Camera Rule by discussing a Family Law Case outside the confines of the Family Court.

Obtaining the information by a third party and dealing with it outside of the Courts is in breach of In Camera because it is only the Parties and the Judge in Question that should Know the private details of each individual case.

It is only a Court of Law that can determine what an individual has in relation to Disposable Income, Assets, Liabilities and Outgoings.

The Department does not examine what is left over as surplus and are not qualified to do so either.

In relation to all aspects of Family Law they target the most Vulnerable instead of recovering it from those

Parents that are Co-Habiting with a New Partner

While

Receiving exorbitant rent allowance from the Community Welfare Officer.

Receiving a Weeks wages that come with the new Partner.

In receipt of Lone Parent's benefits.

Maintenance payments from her Ex Partner or Husband.

It is not the absent parent that should be targeted but the true financial situation of the custodial parent and seek the recovery there. stigmatising or blackening all absent parents or all Separated Father's is not the answer.

We also point out that if they are making Fathers Responsible for their Children then give them their Guardianship, Custody and Access rights to coincide with Maintenance payments. With Responsibility comes Rights and with Rights should come Responsibility. Once again we see this as an attack on Men and Father's as being projected as the bad ones.