

Girl, 11, sues CSA for £100,000

By JOHN COLES
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A GIRL of 11 is suing the Child Support Agency for £100,000 for failing to get maintenance from her dad.

Alexandra Mainwaring claims the negligence of the discredited Government body has stopped her leading a normal life.

In a High Court writ, she says the CSA's failure to force estranged father Aled to pay up since 1996 caused her "financial hardship" and breached her human rights.

This led to a string of problems including bullying, a lack of proper food and clothing and no school trips.

Alexandra, of Llangennech, South Wales, has brought the landmark case — which could open the floodgates for thousands more claims — through her mother Cath Nethle. It will be heard later this year.

Her writ says: "The repeated failure to enforce the maintenance arrears or collect them prevented the claimant and her family from leading a normal family life and failed thereby to accord them respect for their private life."

ALEXANDRA CLAIMS SHE:

- was attacked by school bullies
- went without proper food
- had to miss sports trips
- was unable to buy computers
- had to wear second-hand uniform
- could not afford school trips
- was unable to entertain friends

Aled's relationship with Cath broke down in 1996, within a year of Alexandra's birth. The writ says that Cath applied to the CSA for maintenance payments in September 1996 — but her husband has failed to pay anything since then.

It also claims the CSA repeatedly failed to chase him up — with the result that Alexandra and her mum lost out on almost £78,500.

More than £25,000 of that cannot be recovered due to time limitations imposed by child support legislation.

However, Alexandra is now seeking £53,358 — plus interest and damages.

Cath said: "There is a point of principle at stake. If the action succeeds, the door will open for many children denied rights by absent fathers."

Alexandra's solicitor Stephen Lawson said: "The CSA has neglected its duty of care. Ultimately the Government has to be held accountable."

The Dept for Work and Pensions, which runs the CSA, did not comment on the case. But a spokeswoman said: "We have accepted the CSA doesn't do what it's meant to, which is why we're reforming it."

Officials say the CSA, which has a backlog of 300,000 cases and debts topping £3billion, will be replaced by a smaller, "more focused" body.