



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Child Maintenance Service Statistics

Background information and methodology

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Purpose of the statistics

This document provides an overview of the performance of the Child Maintenance Service with the most up-to-date statistics and breakdowns. This publication does not include information on the Child Support Agency (CSA). Statistics on the CSA are available from the CSA Quarterly Statistical Summary and CSA Case Closure publications:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/child-support-agency-quarterly-summary-statistics--2>

Context

Child maintenance is financial support between separated parents to help with the everyday living costs of looking after children.

If they agree, separated parents can arrange child maintenance themselves. This is called a 'family-based arrangement'. A family-based arrangement is a private way to sort out child maintenance. Parents arrange everything themselves and no-one else has to be involved.

The Child Maintenance Service which replaces the Child Support Agency (CSA) is for when the parents can't agree to a family-based arrangement. The Child Maintenance Service can calculate the amount of maintenance to be paid and parents can then arrange the payments between themselves, this is called **Direct Pay**. If the parents cannot do this or they don't pay what was agreed, the Child Maintenance Service can collect and manage the payments between the parents; this is known as **Collect and Pay**. The Child Maintenance Service has a range of enforcement actions it can use if the Paying Parent refuses to pay their child maintenance.

Parents wishing to use the Child Maintenance Service must first contact Child Maintenance Options.

Child Maintenance Options provides free, impartial support and advice to help parents pick the child maintenance arrangement best suited to their situation.

Data Quality and Sources

The Child Maintenance Service was launched in a stage approach:

Stage 1 – 10/12/12 - The service was opened to new applications containing at least 4 children.

Stage 2 – 29/07/13 – New applications containing at least 2 children could now apply.

Stage 3 – 25/11/13 – The service was opened to all applications.

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These statistics provide information from stage 2 to present day. Before stage 2 there were very low numbers of applications and limited performance data was available. This therefore does not provide a true view of the Child Maintenance Services performance and the data was not accurate enough to be published.

The statistics in the publication come from different data sources. Some of these are from administrative data, management information and some from Clerical data. We have ensured that all our tables are based on the most accurate and relevant data available

- **Administrative data** is data generated and stored on the Child Maintenance Service computer systems. The Child Maintenance Service stores information on all parents using the service and the quality of this information is very good.
- **Management information** is aggregate information and statistics collected and used by the Child Maintenance Service to manage the business, monitor performance and inform policies. It is usually based on administrative data but can also come from survey data. The terms administrative data and management information are sometimes used interchangeably.
- **Clerical data** is gathered manually and usually stored in spreadsheets. As the data is entered manually it goes through multiple checks to ensure its accuracy.

We are confident that all our data sources meet publishable standards.

The table below sets out the source(s) for each table

Table	Measure	Source
1	Applications to the Child Maintenance Service	Administrative Datasets
2	Application fee exemptions	Administrative Datasets
3	Intake	Administrative Datasets
4	Caseload	Administrative Datasets
5	Payment Arrangements - Paying Parent Based	Administrative Datasets
6	Paying Parents Compliance	Administrative Datasets
7	Parents switching to and from the Direct Pay service	Administrative Datasets
8	Money Due and Paid	Administrative Datasets
9	Total Amount of Unpaid Money	Management Information
10	Children benefiting or with parents on Direct Pay	Administrative Datasets
11	Enforcement Actions	Administrative and Clerical data.
12	Financial Investigations Unit - Actions	Management Information
13	Shared care	Administrative Datasets
14	Change of Circumstances	Administrative Datasets
15	Mandatory Reconsiderations	Administrative Datasets
16	Appeals	Management Information
17	Complaints	Management Information
18	Accuracy	Management Information
19	Telephony	Management Information

Definitions and Terminology

Accuracy: A child maintenance calculation is considered accurate if it is within £1.00 or 2% of the correct current calculation based on the latest maintenance assessment at the point when the arrangement was checked.

Appeals: The number of parents who have made an appeal to the Child Maintenance Service or Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service to review a decision made by the Child Maintenance Service.

Application Fee: A parent making an application to the Child Maintenance Service is charged £20 to make the application.

Application Fee Exemptions: If the parent making the application to the Child Maintenance Service is less than 19 years old or they declare they have been the victim of domestic violence then they do not have to pay the application fee.

Applications: The total number of applications made to the Child Maintenance Service in a three month period. Around 99% of new applications go on to join the Child Maintenance Service.

Arrangement: An agreement to provide financial support for a child's everyday living costs.

Caseload: The number of child maintenance arrangements being managed by the Child Maintenance Service.

Case Closure: The process of closing down cases on the Child Support Agency.

Change of Circumstances: Either parent can report a change to their circumstances. The Child Maintenance Service then updates their records accordingly and recalculates the child maintenance due if necessary.

Charge for payment: This is a Scottish enforcement action only. This is where, once the debt has been legally recognised via a Liability Order, the Child Maintenance Service refers the case to Sheriff Officers to serve the Charge for Payment on the paying parent.

Charging Orders: An enforcement action where a County Court order for a legally recognised unpaid maintenance is attached to the equity of a paying parent's property. Charging orders apply only in England and Wales.

Children benefiting: The number of children where the paying parent using the Collect and Pay service pays at least some of their child maintenance in the last three months.

Compliance: If the parents are using the Collect and Pay service and the paying parent has paid some child maintenance in the last three months then they are considered to be compliant.

Collect & Pay and Direct Pay: Once the Child Maintenance Service calculates the amount of maintenance to be paid. Some parents will then arrange the payments between themselves; this is called **Direct Pay**. If the parents can't do this or the paying parent does not make the payments then the Child Maintenance Service can collect and manage the payments between the parents. This service is known as **Collect and Pay**.

Domestic Abuse: The term 'Domestic abuse' describes a wide range of threatening, abusive, controlling or violent behaviours. It can include emotional and financial abuse, as well as physical or sexual violence.

Enforcement: When a paying parent using the Collect & Pay service does not pay their child maintenance the Child Maintenance Service can take action to get the child maintenance owed. The Child Maintenance Service can collect unpaid child maintenance in 3 different ways:

1. Take money from the paying parent's earnings or benefits. The Child Maintenance Service can tell the paying parents employer how much to take from their wages. The employer must then pass on the money or they can be taken to court. This is done through a **deduction from earnings order/request**.
2. Money can be taken directly from the paying parent's bank or building society account by using a **deduction order**.
3. A paying parent can be taken to court over unpaid child maintenance. The courts can grant **liability orders** which allow the parent to be referred to Enforcement Agents who could come and take away property to be sold to pay the arrears and costs. The courts could also apply a **charging order** to force the parent to sell property and use the money to pay off the child maintenance arrears. If these methods fail the Child Maintenance Service can apply for the courts to disqualify the parent from driving or send them to prison.

Enforcement Agent actions: This is where the Child Maintenance Service has passed the unpaid child maintenance owed by the Paying Parent, to an enforcement agency for collection. Enforcement Agents have legal powers to remove and sell items from the paying parent's home and use the money to pay the unpaid child maintenance. The enforcement agency can also charge the Paying Parent a fee to do this.

Intake: The number of successful applications to the Child Maintenance Service.

Liability order: A Paying Parent can be taken to court over unpaid child maintenance. The courts can grant liability orders which allow the parent to be referred to Enforcement Agents who could come and take away property to be sold to pay the unpaid maintenance and costs. The courts could also apply a charging order to force the parent to sell property (**Orders for Sale**) and use the money to pay off the unpaid maintenance. If these methods fail the Child Maintenance Service can apply for the courts to disqualify the parent from driving or send them to prison.

Mandatory Reconsiderations: Where a parent has asked the Child Maintenance Service to reconsider a decision.

Money Due: The amount of child maintenance that is due to be paid.

Money Paid: The amount of child maintenance paid.

Paused Application: An application can be paused if one of the parents has a child maintenance arrangement through the Child Support Agency which is being closed.

Paying Parent: The parent who doesn't have main day-to-day care of the child.

Receiving Parent: The parent with main day-to-day care of the child

Sanctions: These are enforcement actions such as sending Paying Parents to prison or disqualifying them from driving and only used when every other method of recovering unpaid child maintenance has been tried. The Child Maintenance Service

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only pursues these sanctions when they believe the Paying Parent can pay but they are refusing to.

Shared Care: Where a paying parent's child stays overnight with them. In these cases the Child Maintenance Service makes a deduction to the weekly child maintenance amount based on the average number of 'shared care' nights a week.

Unpaid Maintenance: The amount of child maintenance that the paying parent has not paid.

Users and Uses

The main users of the statistics in this document are:

- The public
- External interest groups
- Parliament
- Department for Work and Pensions Ministers
- Ministers and officials in other Government departments
- Academics
- The media and external commentators

These statistics are used by a number of internal stakeholders for:

- Monitoring and reporting of the Child Maintenance Services performance.
- Internal analysis to help improve the Child Maintenance Services performance.
- Informing ministerial briefings and press releases.
- Answering Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests
- Policy evaluation to help external users gauge the performance of the Child Maintenance Service

Our internet-based publication means that we cannot ascertain all the varied uses of the numbers produced. However, we do know these statistics are used for:

- Providing general information on the Child Maintenance Service in Great Britain.
- Measuring performance of the child maintenance scheme.
- Informing discussions and meetings with external stakeholders and MPs.
- Social research and academic studies of the impact of social policy.

Status of the statistics

Experimental statistics

The statistics have been developed using guidelines set out by the UK Statistics Authority, while they undergo evaluation they are labelled as experimental statistics: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologytopicsandstatisticalconcepts/guidetoexperimentalstatistics>

Feedback

We welcome feedback

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at cm.analysis.research@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

Useful links

Previous Releases

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics>

For information and statistics on Child Maintenance Options and family-based arrangements please see the quarterly survey results of parents who speak to Child Maintenance Options: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics>

Further information and statistics on the performance and closure of the Child Support Agency can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/child-support-agency-quarterly-summary-statistics--2>

Annex

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