

Child maintenance arrangements made after speaking to Child Maintenance Options

Data up to September 2017

Quarterly

Published: 23 January 2018
Great Britain

Experimental

Child Maintenance Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help parents make informed choices about child maintenance.

- We carried out telephone surveys in September 2017 of parents who called Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2017.
- We asked parents about their types of child maintenance arrangement and if they thought it was working well.
- The estimates in this publication are based on those telephone interviews.

Main Stories



85%

A quarter of parents who contacted Options had a family-based arrangement

85% of parents with a family-based arrangement thought it worked well

At a glance

Page

25% of arrangements were family-based arrangements

3

85% of parents with a family-based arrangement thought it worked well

5

Over 9,000 functioning family-based arrangements were created after contacting Options

6

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Feedback is welcome

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What you need to know

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

If they agree, separated parents can arrange child maintenance themselves. This is called a '**family-based arrangement**' and is a private way to sort out child maintenance. Parents arrange everything themselves and no-one else has to be involved. Family-based arrangements can be regular financial payments or flexible arrangements which may include a financial element or transactions in kind.

The Child Maintenance Service, which replaces the Child Support Agency (CSA), is for when the parents can't agree to a family-based arrangement. Parents wishing to use the Child Maintenance Service must first speak to Child Maintenance Options (Options) who can refer them to the Child Maintenance Service. For information on the performance of the Child Maintenance Service please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-the-2012-statutory-child-maintenance-scheme>

Child Maintenance Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements.

Child maintenance can also be arranged through the court system.

Flexible family-based arrangements, Options and Children Benefiting

A **flexible family-based arrangement** is a family-based arrangement that contains non-regular payments for the support of the children or payments in kind.

Child maintenance arrangements after Options are arrangements that were set up or changed after contact with Child Maintenance Options. **Other child maintenance arrangements** are arrangements made prior to contact with Child Maintenance Options that have not changed since contact with Options.

A family-based arrangement consisting of regular financial payments is counted as **functioning** if all or some of the agreed money is being paid. A flexible family-based arrangement is considered to be **functioning** if the parent surveyed believes it is working fairly well or very well.

For family-based arrangements consisting of regular financial payments **Children benefiting** is the number of children for whom a paying parent is contributing some or all of the due child maintenance. For flexible family-based arrangements it is the number of children covered by a child maintenance arrangement where the surveyed parent believes it is working fairly or very well.

For more details see the Background Information document:

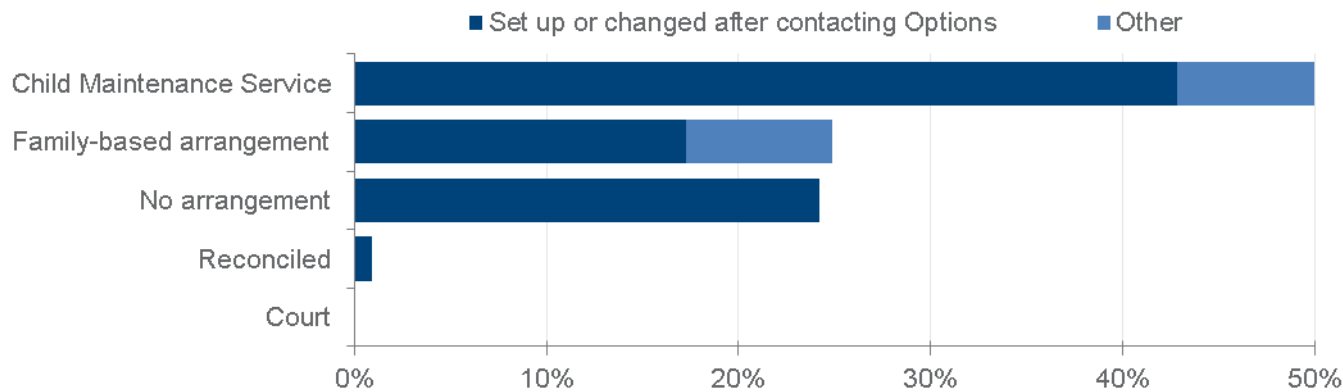
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics-background-information-and-methodology>

Child Maintenance Arrangements

Out of the 55,900 parents that had contact with Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2017, 75% had a child maintenance arrangement at the time of surveying. That is 41,800 child maintenance arrangements.

A quarter of parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options had family-based arrangements

Types of child maintenance arrangements made by parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2017 and were surveyed in October 2017



17% of parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options setup a family-based arrangement. 8% of parents already had a family-based arrangement before they contacted Options giving a total of 25% of parents that have family-based arrangements.

50% of parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options now have an arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service. 43% of all parents set up their arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service after speaking to Options and 7% already had their arrangement in place before they called Options between May and July 2017.

24% of parents had not agreed a child maintenance arrangement after contacting Options. This is consistent with results from previous surveys.

See **Table 1** for full data.

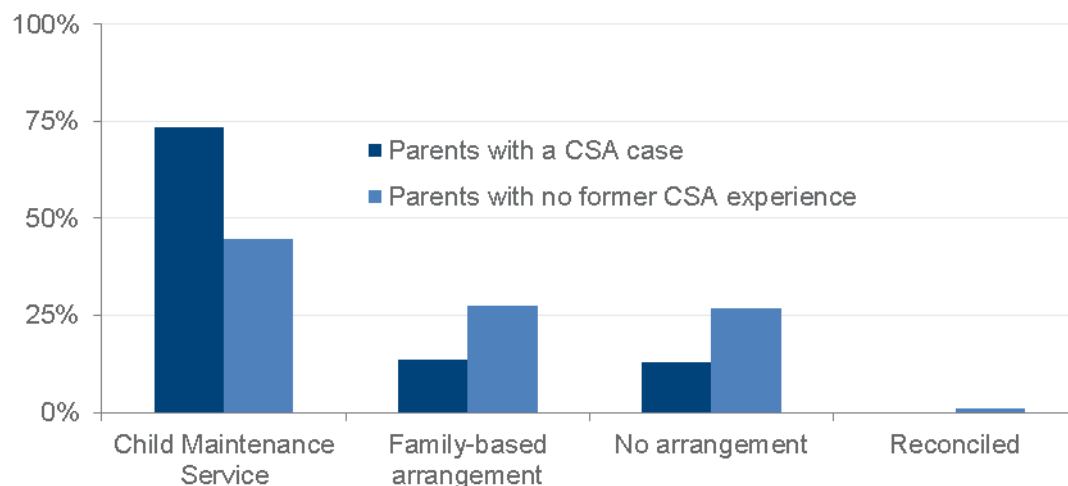
Parents with prior Child Support Agency involvement

The Child Support Agency (CSA) only handles existing child maintenance cases. New applications are dealt with by the Child Maintenance Service. Child maintenance arrangements made through the CSA will be ending in 2018, except for payments of built-up arrears. Parents have been contacted and encouraged to contact Child Maintenance Options for support in agreeing a new child maintenance arrangement. 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>

Parents with previous CSA cases are identified through calls to a dedicated Child Maintenance Options telephone number. Some parents with CSA cases may not use this number so the true number of parents who had CSA cases may be higher.

73% of parents with CSA cases who contacted Options decided to apply to the Child Maintenance Service

Child Maintenance Arrangements made by parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2017 by parent history, surveyed in October 2017



73% of parents with previous CSA cases who contacted Child Maintenance Options created a new child maintenance arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service. This is a statistically significant difference from the 45% of parents who do not have previous involvement with the CSA.

The remaining parents with previous CSA cases who contacted Child Maintenance Options made a Family-based arrangement or did not set up a child maintenance arrangement. Only 13% of former CSA clients did not set up an arrangement, compared with 27% of other clients. This is another statistically significant difference.

A result is **Statistically Significant** if it cannot be attributed to chance. This publication measures statistical significance at the 95% level which means you would only expect to see the result caused by chance 1 in 20 times

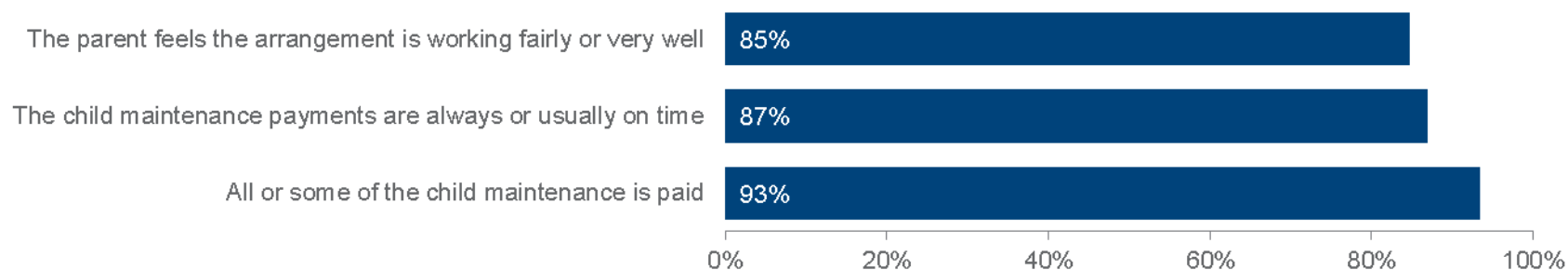
See **Table 2** for full data.

Family-based arrangements

Parents are asked questions about their family-based arrangements to establish whether the surveyed parent feels it is working well, if the arrangement involves regular payments, if these payments are being made and if they are on time.

85% of parents with a family-based arrangement thought it worked well

Parents responses to questions about their family-based arrangements, they contacted Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2017 and were surveyed in October 2017



85% of parents with a family-based arrangement said it worked well.

For those with family-based arrangements that consist of regular payments:

- 87% said they received their payments always or usually on time
- 93% said they received all or some of the agreed amount
- 85% said they paid or received some or all of their child maintenance **and** it was usually or always on time.

See **Table 3** for full data.

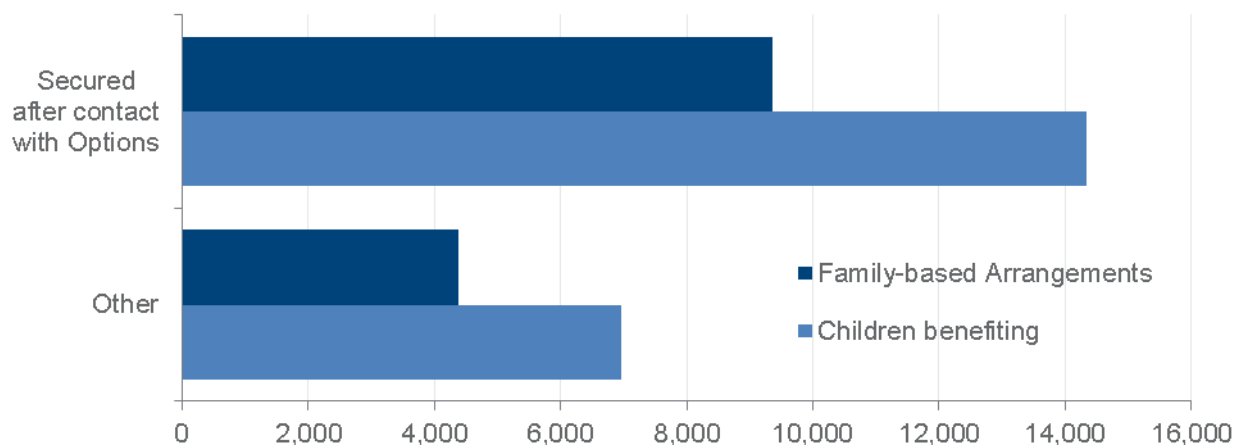
Children benefiting from family-based arrangements

A family-based arrangement consisting of regular financial payments is counted as “functioning” if all or some of the agreed money is being paid. A flexible family-based arrangement is considered to be functioning if the parent surveyed believes it is working fairly well or very well.

Not all family-based arrangements are secured after contact with Child Maintenance Options. Some are set up before the parent contacts Child Maintenance Options and some parents cannot remember if they set up or changed their arrangement before or after they spoke with Options. These family based arrangements are known as other family-based arrangements.

Over 9,000 functioning family-based arrangements were created after contacting Options

Functioning family-based arrangements and children benefiting for parents that contacted Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2017, surveyed in October 2017



9,400 functioning family-based arrangements were set up or changed by parents after contacting Child Maintenance Options in May-July 2017. 14,300 children are benefiting from these arrangements.

There were an additional 4,400 functioning family-based arrangements that had been set up before the parent contacted Options. 7,000 children benefit from these.

See **Table 4** for full data.

About these statistics

The data is produced through quarterly and an annual longitudinal survey conducted by Child Maintenance Options on behalf of the DWP.

The population is all separated parents who have had a full telephone discussion about their child maintenance needs with Child Maintenance Options.

In the quarterly surveys, the results are weighted to be representative of the number of parents who had a full telephone conversation about their child maintenance needs with Child Maintenance Options. For the annual survey, the results are weighted to be representative of the different child maintenance arrangements parents said they had in the quarterly surveys.

Certain types of parents are excluded from the sampling frame for practical purposes, including non-English speakers and parents who opt out of being contacted for research purposes.

These statistics have been developed using guidelines set out by the UK Statistics Authority.

Changes to the publication

The current publication no longer calculates effectiveness. Instead we present three separate measures to show the fuller views of the surveyed parents.

1. The percentage of parents who believe their child maintenance arrangement is working fairly or very well.
2. The percentage of parents who believe they receive/pay all or some of their due child maintenance.
3. The percentage of parents who believe they receive/pay their due child maintenance always or usually on time.

The previous effectiveness measure can still be found within table 5 of the summary tables to allow consistency over time.

In previous publications the number of children benefiting has been counted as the number of children covered by an effective child maintenance arrangement. This has now changed as follows: For family-based arrangements consisting of regular financial payments it is the number of children who are covered by a child maintenance arrangement where the paying parent is contributing some or all of the due child maintenance. For flexible family-based arrangements it is the number of children covered by these arrangements where the parent believes the arrangement is working fairly or very well. This means more children will be counted as benefiting as the arrangement is not required to meet all three of the rules that made up the effectiveness measure.

Where to find out more

This document and the summary tables can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/effective-family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-data-to-march-2017>

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

How we plan to evaluate child maintenance reform: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387584/child-maintenance-reforms-evaluation-strategy.pdf

The Child Maintenance Options website has further information on their work: <http://www.cmoptions.org/>

Information and statistics on the Child Maintenance Service can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-the-2012-statutory-child-maintenance-scheme>