



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.

Time Period Covered

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.

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.

Definitions and Terminology

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 abuse 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 are accepted by 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 ending liability and closing all the cases on the Child Support Agency. Parents are then encouraged to contact Options to discuss their child maintenance needs.

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.

Children Covered: The number of children who the paying parent has a child maintenance arrangement for.

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 parent's 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, holding a passport or send them to prison.

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

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. This is based on the amount of child maintenance the Child Maintenance Service calculated that should be paid in the quarter. Therefore, it may include previously unpaid child maintenance that was rescheduled to be collected in that quarter (including maintenance transferred from a Direct Pay case) but will not include maintenance scheduled to be paid in future quarters.

Money Paid: The amount of child maintenance paid. This does not include any money due or paid to the Child Maintenance Service for using its services.

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 and pays child maintenance.

Receiving Parent: The parent with main day-to-day care of the child and who receives child maintenance.

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

Data Quality and Sources

Data Sources

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.

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- **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	Child Maintenance Arrangements for Paying Parents	Administrative Datasets
5	Changes to the Child Maintenance Service Arrangements	Administrative Datasets
6	How much child maintenance are Paying Parents paying?	Administrative Datasets
7	Paying Parents Compliance	Administrative Datasets
8	Money Due and Paid each Quarter	Administrative Datasets
9	How much child maintenance the Child Maintenance Service has arranged	Management Information
10	Children Covered by the Child Maintenance Service	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	Telephony	Management Information

Arrangements, Paying Parents, and Children: Criteria for Inclusion in the Statistics

Which arrangements are included in these statistics?

Counts of arrangements (including counts of applications and intake) included in these statistics include all open child maintenance arrangements for which some maintenance has been arranged under the Child Maintenance Service. For an arrangement to be open, either:

- the Paying Parent has an ongoing liability to pay child maintenance, even if the amount is calculated as zero (as a result of the Paying Parent's circumstances); or
- there are outstanding child maintenance arrears owed by the Paying Parent.

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Some child maintenance arrangements which were previously managed by the Child Support Agency have been transferred onto the Child Maintenance Service. These arrangements are included in counts if, and only if, ongoing maintenance has been arranged since the case has moved onto the Child Maintenance Service (for the avoidance of doubt, this includes cases for which the amount due was calculated as zero as a result of the Paying Parent's circumstances).

Counts of arrangements (and applications / intake) included in these statistics do not include those for which arrears that were incurred under the Child Support Agency have been transferred to the Child Maintenance Service, but no ongoing maintenance has become due under the Child Maintenance Service.

However, statistics relating to other processes (e.g. enforcement actions, telephony) may, unless otherwise indicated, include processes or actions relating to arrangements for which arrears that were incurred under the Child Support Agency have been transferred to the Child Maintenance Service, but no ongoing maintenance has become due under the Child Maintenance Service.

Which children are included in these statistics?

Counts of children included in these statistics include all children who are associated with an open arrangement (as defined above), and are below 20 years of age.

This will include a relatively small number of individuals between 16 and 19 years of age (inclusive), who are no longer considered a qualifying child for the purpose of calculating ongoing maintenance, for cases in which the relevant arrangement is still open (because there are arrears or other qualifying children).

This is because individuals in this age bracket only qualify for child maintenance if:

- they are in full-time non-advanced education; or
- the Receiving Parent is still entitled to Child Benefit in respect of that child.

Which Paying Parents are included in these statistics?

The counts of Paying Parents in Table 4 include all unique Paying Parents associated with arrangements that are included in the statistics (i.e. those meeting the criteria defined above).

The counts in table 7 only include Paying Parents who were due to pay some child maintenance in the relevant quarter. In this table, individual Paying Parents may be counted under both Direct Pay and Collect & Pay, because a Paying Parent may have more than one arrangement, and these arrangements may have different service types.

Use of Estimates in December 2018

During December 2018, there was a problem with data feeds which affected some of the figures reported for December 2018. Data were corrected as far as possible. However, the following tables / metrics were still significantly affected, and were replaced with estimated values, which were calculated as outlined below.

- **Weekly amounts which Paying Parents were due to pay, during the month of December 2018 (Table 6).** The total number of Paying Parents was unaffected by the data problems, but the breakdown between the various liability bands was identified as being affected. Estimates were calculated using a method which leaves the total number of Paying Parents in December 2018 unchanged. For each liability band:
 - the percentage of Paying Parents falling into that liability band was calculated for the month of November 2018;
 - the percentage of Paying Parents falling into that liability band was calculated for the month of January 2019;
 - the average (mean) of the two percentages above was taken as an estimate of the percentage of Paying Parents falling into that liability band during the month of December 2018; then
 - the estimated number of Paying parents falling into that liability band for the month of December was calculated as a product of the estimated percentage (calculated above) and the total number of Paying Parents.

- **Money due and paid during the quarter ending December 2018 (Table 8).** Estimates were calculated by finding the average (mean) of a) the value arranged / paid for the quarter ending November 2018, and b) the value arranged / paid for the quarter ending January 2019. (These figures were not affected by the data problem.) This was carried out independently for the following metrics:
 - amount of Child Maintenance due through the Direct Pay service;
 - amount of Child Maintenance due through the Collect & Pay service; and
 - amount of Child Maintenance paid through the Collect & Pay service.

- **Number of Paying Parents using the Collect & Pay service with a deduction from earnings order/request (DEO/R) that were compliant, during the quarter ending December 2018 (Table 11).** The total number of Paying Parents with a DEO/R was unaffected by the data problem, but the number identified as compliant was affected. The percentage of Paying Parents with a DEO/R that were compliant was calculated for the quarter ending November 2018, and then for the quarter ending January 2019. (These figures were not affected by the data problem.) The percentage of Paying Parents with a DEO/R that were compliant for the quarter ending December 2018 was estimated as being the average (mean) of these two values. The estimated number of Paying Parents with a DEO/R that were compliant for the quarter ending December 2018 was then calculated as the product of this percentage and the total number of paying parents with a DEO/R.

- **Values collected via deduction from earnings orders/requests and civil enforcement actions (Table 11).** Estimates were calculated by finding the average (mean) of a) the value collected during the quarter ending November 2018, and b) the value collected during the quarter ending January 2019. (These figures were not affected by the data problem.) This was carried out independently for the following metrics:

- Total money collected from Paying Parents via Deduction from Earnings Orders or Requests; and
- Total money collected from Paying Parents using the Collect & Pay service with a deduction from earnings order/request in place or a Civil Enforcement action.

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/guide-to-experimental-statistics>

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@dwp.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

Child Maintenance Service Overview

