Department for Work & Pensions

Child Maintenance Service statistics: data to March 2020 (experimental)

Published 24 June 2020

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1. Introduction

The Child Maintenance Service was introduced in December 2012 as part of the government's Child Maintenance reforms, to replace the Child Support Agency (CSA). This is the latest release of statistics on the Child Maintenance Service between January 2019 and March 2020. The release includes revisions to previously published statistics.

The next release is planned for September 2020.

1. Introduction

The Child Maintenance Service was introduced in December 2012 as part of the government's Child Maintenance reforms, to replace the Child Support Agency (CSA). This is the latest published statistics on the current arrangements between Parents.

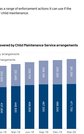
Direct Pay is where the Child Maintenance Service calculates the amount of maintenance to be paid and parents arrange the payments between themselves.

Payments cannot do this or they do not pay what was agreed, then the Child Maintenance Service can intervene and manage the payments between them. This is the Collect and Pay service.

The Child Maintenance Service has a range of enforcement actions it can use if the Paying Parent refuses to pay their child maintenance.

2. Main stories

Figure 1: 310,000 children are covered by Child Maintenance Service arrangements



Source: Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2020, national tables, table 6.

68% of parents due to pay child maintenance through the Collect and Pay service paid some maintenance in the quarter ending March 2020.

The Collect and Pay service is largely composed of individuals that transferred from the Direct Pay service, after failing to pay their liability.

The sustained rate of improvement observed in this metric during 2018 and early 2019 has now levelled off.

Effect of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This publication covers data up to the end of March 2020. During the final weeks of this period, the Child Maintenance Service was affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and the resultant changes to the department's operational priorities. Although this has had an impact on the data, it is too early to fully see the impact on the figures these capture to be minimal. We expect that the impact will be clearly identified in the statistics for subsequent quarters.

3. What you need to know

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

If they agree, separated parents can arrange child maintenance themselves. This is called a Family-based Arrangement. If they can't agree, the Child Maintenance Service can work out how much money should be paid and collect it for parents.

The Child Maintenance Service, which replaced the Child Support Agency (CSA), is for short-term cases (paying for a family-based arrangement). Parents wishing to use the Child Maintenance Service must first contact Child Maintenance Options (CM Options).

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

Figure 3: Outcomes of calls made to CM Options between May and July 2019

Source: Child maintenance arrangements made after separation to CM Options, May 2019 - June 1

Read information on child maintenance arrangements made after separation to CM Options.

Definitions

Receiving Parent
The Receiving Parent has the main day-to-day care of the children and receives the child maintenance.

Paying Parent
The Paying Parent does not have the main day to day care of the children and pays child maintenance.

Children covered
Children covered are the number of children for which the Paying Parent has a child maintenance arrangement.

Compliance
Compliance is where parents using the Collect and Pay service have paid some child maintenance in the last three months.

See the Background information document for more details.

4. Applications to the Child Maintenance Service

Parents who want to apply to the Child Maintenance Service must pay a £20 application fee. Parents do not have to pay this if they:

- have been victims of domestic abuse
- discuss their relationship with their ex-partner
- are under 19 years of age

Some applications to the Child Maintenance Service are from parents who previously had an arrangement with the Child Support Agency.

DCI Child Support Agency cases with an ongoing liability were closed by December 2019. Parents in these cases could apply to the Child Maintenance Service for an arrangement through the Child Maintenance Service. However, the Child Maintenance Service could also receive applications from such parents, as they may have had a family-based arrangement in the past.

Figure 4: The number of new arrangements paying the Child Maintenance Service has seen a marginal increase this quarter

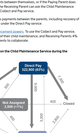
Source: Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2020, national tables, table 3.

Throughout 2019, the rate of applications paying the service continued to decline in line with the downward trend. However, in the last quarter, ending March 2020, the number of applications rose by 1% on the previous year. Applications from parents with Child Support Agency assessments, and of such annual review, for cases that the arrangement is still meeting their requirements.

Parents cannot arrange between themselves, or if the Paying Parent does not keep up with the payments, the Receiving Parent can use the Child Maintenance Service to collect the payment and Pay the right sum.

The annual review will change the amount the Paying Parent has to pay. This could mean the end of child maintenance payments. To see the Collect and Pay Paying Parents are charged 20% of their child maintenance, and Receiving Parents 4%. This is intended to encourage parents to make family arrangements.

Figure 5: Flow of arrangements on the Child Maintenance Service during the quarter ending March 2020



Source: Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2020, national tables, table 4.

Each box on Figure 5 shows the number, and percentage, of arrangements using that service type at the end of the quarter. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Arrows represent the number of cases that moved between service types during the quarter. For example, 5,400 cases left Direct Pay, 400 of these cases are excluded from this diagram, but can be found in table 4 of the statistical tables.

Arrangements may not be assigned to a service type for a short period following application, for example, while the Child Maintenance Service gathers information, including the progress of new applications, needed to be assessed that, resulting in an increase in the number of arrangements not yet assigned to a service type. It is anticipated this will continue to increase with recovery action begins.

Figure 5 shows:

- more new applications chosen to start on Direct Pay 18,300 new applicants joined Direct Pay in the quarter ending March 2020
- 63% of all Child Maintenance Service arrangements use Direct Pay, with 37% using Collect and Pay
- more parents move from Direct Pay to Collect and Pay than the other way around 5,400 cases left Direct Pay for Collect and Pay in the quarter
- more arrangements joined the service than left, the number of arrangements increased by 0.75% during this quarter

See table 4 of the statistical tables for more information.

See Glossary for more information on arrangements.

6. Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service

Figure 6: Children covered by Child Maintenance Service arrangements, March 2019 to March 2020

Source: Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2020, national tables, table 6.

For presentational reasons, a small number of children, who are covered by arrangements in more than one category, are not included in this chart. The chart includes at least 99% of children covered by the Child Maintenance Service for all calendar quarters shown.

At the end of March 2020:

- 671,700 children were covered by 322,900 Direct Pay arrangements
- 310,000 children were covered by 168,300 arrangements through the Collect and Pay service
- 149,400 of those children were covered by 105,400 Collect and Pay arrangements where the Paying Parent paid some maintenance during the quarter

84% of all children covered by Child Maintenance Service are covered through Direct Pay arrangements. 54% of children covered by Collect and Pay arrangements where no maintenance was paid in the quarter. These proportions have changed little over the last 12 months (84% and 54%, respectively in March 2019).

See table 5 of the statistical tables for more information.

7. Paying Parents and the Collect and Pay service

This includes Paying Parents transferred from the Direct Pay service because they have failed to keep up with payments.

Figure 7: Compliance rate of Paying Parents due to pay maintenance through the Collect and Pay service, ending March 2018 to March 2020

Source: Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2020, national tables, table 9.

In the quarter ending March 2020, 150,200 Paying Parents cleared some of their child maintenance through the Collect and Pay service. This was 68% of the Paying Parents due to pay child maintenance through the Collect & Pay service in that quarter.

The compliance rate has remained at a stable level over the last year to March 2020.

See table 8 of the statistical tables for more information.

8. Child Maintenance due and paid

The Child Maintenance Service monitors payments made through the Collect and Pay service and can take enforcement action where necessary.

Parents on Direct Pay with unpaid maintenance owed will first have to transfer to Collect and Pay before the Child Maintenance Service can take action. Payments through the Collect and Pay service contract a fee, a share of Paying Parents who are due to pay £9.

Figure 8: Child Maintenance due and paid each quarter, quarters ending March 2018 to March 2020

Source: Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2020, national tables, table 9.

As a result of problems with data feeds, the figures in this chart for the quarter ending December 2019 are estimated. More detail about this is available in the background information document.

During the quarter ending March 2020, £363.4 million Child Maintenance was due to be paid.

£243.1 million was paid through the Collect and Pay service or due to be paid through Direct Pay arrangements.

£167.9 million due to be paid through Direct Pay arrangements

£143.2 million paid through the Collect and Pay service

Over the long term, the amount of money due to be paid through the Collect and Pay service has increased, as more cases have transferred to the service.

£8.3 million of maintenance due to be paid through the Collect and Pay service in the quarter ending March 2020 was not paid.

Since 2012, when the Child Maintenance Service began, £34.2 million in unpaid maintenance is owed through the Collect and Pay service. This amounts to 16% of all maintenance due to be paid through the Collect and Pay service. Unpaid child maintenance transferred from Direct Pay to Collect and Pay.

See tables 9 and 10 of the statistical tables for more information.

9. Enforcement

When a payment is missed, the Child Maintenance Service contacts the Paying Parent to arrange a recovery of what is owed or to make clear the actions that may be pursued in the absence of a payment.

For parents on Collect and Pay, enforcement is automatically pursued on their behalf.

For parents on Direct Pay (where the receiving parent asks the Child Maintenance Service to pursue payment), the Child Maintenance Service can use the Collect and Pay service before any enforcement action can commence.

The Child Maintenance Service can collect unpaid child maintenance in 3 major ways:

1. deduction from earnings order or request – money is recovered from the paying parent's employer before it reaches the paying parent's bank account. This is automatic
2. deduction order – money is deducted directly from the paying parent's bank or building society account
3. courts – a paying parent can be taken to court over unpaid maintenance

The courts can grant liability orders, which allow further action to be taken, such as seizure of goods and assets, which can seize goods and sell them to cover unpaid maintenance and costs.

Where the paying parent is a homeowner, courts may grant a charging order against the property, which prevents any sale without repayment of the outstanding amount.

Ultimately, the court may grant an order for sale which forces the sale of the property. If the courts are unsuccessful, the Child Maintenance Service may apply for the courts to:

- disqualify the parent from holding or obtaining a driving licence
- disqualify the parent from holding or obtaining a passport

Where the paying parent is a self-employed person, courts may grant a charging order against the property, which prevents any sale without repayment of the outstanding amount.

Figure 9: Enforcement actions taking place, quarters ending March 2018 to March 2020

Source: Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2020, national tables, table 11.

At the end of March 2020:

- 49,200 deductions from earnings orders and requests were in place
- 3,700 liability orders were in process
- 6,500 enforcement agent referrals were in process
- 3,600 regular and lump sum deduction orders were in place

See tables 11 and 12 of the national tables for more information.

10. About these statistics

Comparisons

Comparisons between these statistics on the Child Maintenance Service and statistics on the Child Support Agency should not be made as the 2 services have different aims and cover different groups.

The government's changes to the child maintenance system in 2012 were designed to encourage parents to work together to provide for their children. Child Maintenance Options was created to support parents to set up collaborative, family-based arrangement. The Child Maintenance Service was intended for those parents who cannot make family-based arrangements.

Rounding

Figures contained within this publication are rounded to the nearest hundred, percent, or £100,000. Percentages are calculated prior to rounding.

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

Changes made to this publication

Stat-Xplore

We have moved data at arrangement level over to the Department for Work and Pensions StatXplore tool. This tool allows users to create custom statistical tables relating to arrangements on the Child Maintenance Service.

Subsequently the following changes have occurred:

- Table Numbers – due to the removal of a table, please be aware that some table numbers have changed.
- The number of Paying Parents and their Child Maintenance Arrangements (formerly Table 4) – This table has been removed from the National Tables, as arrangements data is now available on Stat-Xplore. Information on the number of Paying Parents is available in Table 7 ("How much Child Maintenance were Paying Parents due to pay?").
- Table 6: Shared Care (formerly Table 7) – The breakdown of arrangements by shared care status is now available through StatXplore. It will no longer be available as part of this table, although this table will still be published with the breakdown of children by shared care status.

Table 11.2: Enforcement Actions - Detail on Sanctions

This table will no longer provide counts of Sists or Continuations in Scotland as we have found the underlying data does not allow for meaningful comparison across time. This also means that Sists and Continuations will no longer be counted as 'outcomes' in the relevant sub-totals. For more information, see the footnotes to this table.

Table 14: Mandatory Reconsiderations

The timeliness metric used in this table has changed. It now shows the volume of Mandatory Reconsiderations cleared within 28 days of receipt as a percentage of the volume of all Mandatory Reconsiderations cleared within the quarter. In previous publications, we reported the volume of Mandatory Reconsiderations cleared within 28 days of receipt as a percentage of the volume of all Mandatory Reconsiderations received within the quarter. For transparency, the old metric has been included in the table for one final time; it will be removed in the September 2020 publication. For information on the reasons for this change, see the footnotes to this table. Feedback may be sent to cm.analysis.research@dwp.gov.uk

Where to find out more

For the first time, Child Maintenance Service statistics are available on Stat-Xplore, an online tool for exploring some of the Department for Work and Pensions' main statistics. We are hoping to move more of our regular statistics to the Stat-Xplore platform in the near future.

Read previous releases of these statistics.

Read information and statistics on family-based arrangements.

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ISBN: 978-1-78659-235-4

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