Department for Work & Pensions

Guidance

Child Maintenance Service statistics: background information and methodology

Updated 24 June 2020

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Purpose of the statistics

This document provides an overview of the performance of the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) 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.

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 replaced the Child Support Agency (CSA), is for when the parents cannot agree to a family-based arrangement.

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.

When a parent makes an application to the Child Maintenance Service, they will be told how much child maintenance should be paid. Some parents will then arrange the payments between themselves: this service is known as Direct Pay.

If parents cannot arrange payments between themselves, or if the paying parent does not keep up with the payments, the receiving parent can ask the Child Maintenance Service to switch the case to the Collect and Pay service. This service collects and manages payments between the parents, including recovery of unpaid maintenance that built up under the Direct Pay service. This could involve the use of enforcement powers. To use the Collect and Pay service, paying parents are charged 20% of their child maintenance, and receiving parents 4%: this is intended to encourage parents to collaborate.

Time period covered

The Child Maintenance Service was launched in stages:

Stage 1 (10 December 2012) the service was opened to new applicants with at least 4

children.

Stage 2 (29 July 2013) new applications were open to parents with at least 2 children.

Stage 3 (25 November 2013) the service was opened to all applications.

The quarterly Child Maintenance Statistics provide information from stage 2 to the present day. Prior to this, the numbers of applications were small and limited performance data was available.

The latest release of statistics contains information, from the start of 2015 to the present day, for Great Britain.

Definitions and terminology

A list of the definitions and terminology used within these statistics.

Appeals

Parents who have made an appeal to the Child Maintenance Service or Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to review a decision made by the Child Maintenance Service.

Application fee

Applications to the Child Maintenance Service initially incur a £20 fee with the exception of those who have experienced domestic abuse or are under 19 years old.

Application fee exemptions

If the parent making the application to the Child Maintenance Service is under 19 years old or declares that they, or their child, 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.

Arrangement

For the purpose of this publication, an arrangement is an agreement to provide financial support for a child's everyday living costs.

Case closure

The process of ending the liability and closing all cases on the Child Support Agency. Parents were then encouraged to contact Child Maintenance Options to discuss what to do next.

Caseload

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

Change of circumstances

Parents can report a change to their circumstances. The Child Maintenance Service records this information and updates maintenance calculations where necessary.

Children covered

The number of children for whom the paying parent has a child maintenance arrangement.

Collect and Pay

The Child Maintenance Service collects and manages payments from the paying parent to the receiving parent. If required, the Child Maintenance service will take enforcement actions.

Compliance

If the parents are using the Collect and Pay service and the paying parent has paid some child maintenance in the last 3 months then they are considered to be compliant.

Direct Pay

The Child Maintenance Service calculates the amount of maintenance to be paid, and parents arrange the payments between themselves.

Domestic abuse

Any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; emotional.

Enforcement

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

1. Deduction from earnings order or request – the Child Maintenance Service can instruct a paying parent's employer to deduct child maintenance from the paying parent's earnings.
2. Deduction order – the Child Maintenance Service may recover Unpaid Maintenance from a paying parent's bank or building society account.
3. Civil enforcement actions – 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 referral to enforcement agents, who can seize goods in order to sell them to cover any unpaid maintenance and costs. Where the paying parent is a homeowner, courts can grant a charging order against the property which would prevent any sale without repayment of the outstanding amount. Ultimately, it would grant the power to force the sale of the property by an order for sale. If these methods fail, the Child Maintenance Service can apply for the courts to disqualify the parent from driving or holding a passport, or to send them to prison.

Intake

The number of new arrangements joining the Child Maintenance Service.

Mandatory reconsiderations

Where a parent has asked the Child Maintenance Service to reconsider a decision on how much child maintenance should be paid.

Money due

The amount of child maintenance that is due to be paid. This is calculated by the Child Maintenance Service and should be paid in the quarter. Therefore, it may include arrears from previous quarters or transferred from Direct Pay, rescheduled to be collected in that quarter. This does not include the fees due to the Child Maintenance Service.

Money paid

The amount of child maintenance paid. This does not include any fees paid to the Child Maintenance Service.

Paused applications

Prior to the closure of all ongoing Child Support Agency cases with an ongoing liability (in December 2018), an application could be paused if one of the parents had a child maintenance arrangement through the Child Support Agency which was being closed.

Paying parent

The parent who does not 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. These sanctions 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 do so.

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 for a number of purposes:

- monitoring and reporting of the Child Maintenance Services performance in Great Britain
- internal analysis to help measure and improve the performance of the Child Maintenance Services
- 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
- 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
This is generated and stored on the Child Maintenance Service computer systems. Data on all parents using the service is collected and the quality of this information is good.

Management information
This 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. The quality of this information is good.

Clerical data
This is gathered manually and usually stored in spreadsheets. As the data is entered manually it goes through multiple checks to ensure its accuracy. The quality of this information is reasonable.

We believe all our data sources meet publishable standards.

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

Table	Measure	Source
1	Applications to the Child Maintenance Service	Management Information
2	Application fee exemptions	Management Information
3	Intake	Management Information
4	Service Type changes	Administrative Datasets

5	Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service	Administrative Datasets
6	Shared care	Administrative Datasets
7	How much Child Maintenance were paying parents due to pay?	Administrative Datasets
8	Paying Parents Compliance	Management Information
9	Money Due and Paid each Quarter	Management information
10	How much Child Maintenance the Child Maintenance Service has arranged	Management Information
11.1	Enforcement Actions	Administrative and Clerical data
11.2	Enforcement Actions – Detail on Sanctions	Clerical data
12	Financial Investigations Unit – Actions	Management Information
13	Change of Circumstances	Management Information
14	Mandatory Reconsiderations	Management Information
15	Appeals	Management Information
16	Complaints	Management Information
17	Telephony	Management Information

Arrangements, paying parents, and children: criteria for inclusion in the statistics

Which arrangements are included in these statistics?

In general, counts of arrangements (including applications) 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

Some 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 by the Child Maintenance Service since the case was transferred.

Counts of arrangements (and applications) 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 (for example, enforcement actions, telephony) may, unless otherwise indicated, include processes or actions relating to such arrangements.

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 small number of individuals, between 16 and 19 years of age, 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

At present, the data available to statisticians does not allow us to distinguish whether children between 16 and 19 years of age meet these criteria.

Which paying parents are included in these statistics?

The counts of paying parents in Table 7 include all unique paying parents associated with arrangements meeting the criteria defined above.

The counts in Table 8 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 and 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 7)

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 9)

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 and Pay service
- amount of Child Maintenance paid through the Collect and Pay service

Number of paying parents using the Collect and Pay service with a deduction from earnings order/request (DEO/R) that were compliant, during the quarter ending December 2018 (Table 11.1)

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 11.1)

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
- total money collected from paying parents using the Collect and Pay service with a deduction from earnings order/request in place or a civil enforcement action. Note: this metric is no longer reported as of the September 2019 publication (data to June 2019)

Methodological revisions and publication changes

This section sets out methodological revisions and changes to the publication which have resulted in earlier published statistics being systematically revised, or deemed inaccurate. Details of methodological changes prior to the September 2019 publication (data to June 2019), are outlined in the relevant release documents.

To note: The order of tables and the numbering scheme has changed over time, the table number referenced is correct to the time the changes were made. Table titles have been included to avoid ambiguity.

September 2019 publication (Data to June 2019)

1. Table 10 (Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service) and the Regional Tables: There have been corrections to the methodology used to allocate arrangements (and therefore children) to service types. Figures for previous quarters were revised in this publication. The changes correct the following errors:

- previously, if a Paying Parent made any payments via the Collect & Pay service during a calendar quarter, all arrangements associated with that parent would have been recorded under 'Collect & Pay - Paying', even if they were using Direct Pay at the end of the quarter (due to switching services or having multiple arrangements)
- the small number of arrangements not yet assigned to a service type were previously recorded as being covered by the Collect & Pay service

Approximately 2% of children covered in March 2019 were miscategorised in the statistics as a result of these errors. This rises to approximately 4% for figures relating to earlier times, due to the relatively greater number of arrangements not assigned to service types.

2. Table 4 (The Number of Paying Parents and their Child Maintenance Arrangement) and Table 8 (Money Due and Paid each Quarter): include counts of unique Paying Parents on the Child Maintenance Service. This is calculated by counting the number of unique Paying Parent National Insurance Numbers associated with arrangements. Previously, these were sourced from datasets that were available at the relevant time (e.g. data held at the end of December 2017 were used to give the count for December 2017). The methodology has now changed: the most recent data is now used to identify the Paying Parent associated with each arrangement. This may include subsequent updates or revisions (e.g. where the National Insurance Number of the Paying Parent was unknown at the time of reporting but has since been identified). Although there is minimal change to figures from September 2017, figures prior to this quarter have been revised upwards by approximately 1.0%, with the exception of June 2017, which saw an upwards revision of 2.4%.

3. Table 12 (Enforcement Actions): counts of Civil Enforcement Actions (Liability Orders, Enforcement Agents, Sanctions, Other Civil Enforcement Actions) 'in process', previously included any action ongoing during the last month of the quarter. This now only includes actions that were ongoing at the end of the quarter.

4. Table 12 (Enforcement Actions): counts of liability orders applied for, granted, and withdrawn/dismissed, provided now include liability orders relating to arrangements consisting solely of arrears accrued under the Child Support Agency. This is consistent with data provided elsewhere in Table 12.

5. Table 12 (Enforcement Actions): previously included statistics on the total amount of maintenance collected from parents undergoing a Civil Enforcement Actions or with a Deduction from Earnings Order / Request applied. Following a review of this table, these figures are no longer considered fit for purpose due to the following methodological issues which cannot easily be fixed:

- money collected towards the payment of arrears accrued under the Child Support Agency was not included, as is the case with other figures in the table
- the reported figure counted any money collected during the quarter, from paying parents who had an ongoing enforcement action or Deduction from Earnings Order and Request at the end of the quarter. This means that some payments may have been inappropriately included or excluded

6. Table 12 (Enforcement Actions): the information source used to produce Deduction from Earning Order / Request statistics in Table 12 has been changed, to ensure figures are aligned with internal reports. Changes to published figures are minimal: zero or one rounding unit (100).

December 2019 publication (Data to September 2019)

1. The release document: now published in a webpage (HTML) format, rather than as a PDF. There are number of benefits to this: the new format is intended to be more accessible, and easier to read on portable devices.

2. Table 4 (The Number of Paying Parents and their Child Maintenance Arrangement), Table 5 (Service Type Changes), Table 6 (Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service) and Table 8 (How much Child Maintenance were Paying Parents due to pay?): previously reported counts of Paying Parents, children, and arrangements in these tables have undergone small revisions. This is because one of our data sources did not previously contain full information relating to the specific subset of cases where Child Maintenance arrangements were applied for and created under the Northern Ireland

Child Maintenance Service but have subsequently moved to the service in Great Britain. This has now been corrected. The impact of this change varies depending on the time period being reported, but impacts no more than 0.2% of the caseload at any time.

3. Table 1 (Applications to the Child Maintenance Service): now only reports on the status of applications made in the last 12 months. This is because the source information is not updated beyond this timeframe.

4. All National Tables: The order of tables and the numbering scheme has changed so that tables relating to the same theme are now grouped together.

March 2020 publication (Data to December 2019)

1. Table 6 (Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service) and the Regional Tables: there have been corrections relating to counts of children covered. This affects figures for previous quarters and these have been revised in this publication. The changes correct the following:

- previously, a small number of children who had duplicated records in the source dataset were being counted multiple times. This has been corrected to only count records once, leading to a 1% reduction in counts of children covered by the Child Maintenance Service

2. Table 7 (Shared Care): there have been corrections relating to Shared Care counts, affecting figures reported for previous quarters. These have been revised in this publication. The changes correct the following:

- previously, the methodology did not include systematic rules to handle cases in which children covered by the same Child Maintenance Service arrangement had differing levels of shared care. This has now been corrected to systematically report the highest level of Shared Care used in an arrangement. This has resulted in:
  - the number of arrangements using Shared Care being revised upwards by approximatively 2%
  - the number of arrangements in which at least one child spends “equal nights with both parents” is more affected, and has been revised upwards by approximately 10%

3. Table 12.1 (Enforcements Actions): the introduction of a new table relating to sanctions (see below) has resulted in this table has been renumbered from Table 12 to Table 12.1.

4. Table 12.2 (Enforcement Actions – Detail on Sanctions): this new table provides more detail relating to passport confiscations, disqualifications from driving and prison

sentences for England and Wales and Scotland respectively. The table has been added in response to user demand.

When considering this data, the user should be aware of the following:

- the table has been split into two halves, one covering England and Wales, and one covering Scotland separately. This is to reflect the differing legal systems in the two regions (for further details refer to table footnotes)
- the table only includes data relating to cases heard in open court. Closed court cases are not included to protect the disclosure risk to individuals for these sensitive cases
- table 12.2 only includes cases were an application was made to court to apply a sanction. These will be fewer than the number of 'Sanctions Initiated' given in Table 12.1, which includes cases where:
  - a. Compliance was achieved following a warning letter being issued to the Paying Parent
  - b. The Child Maintenance Service determined that the Paying Parent did not have the means to pay their liabilities
  - c. The Child Maintenance Service decided not to apply to court due to other specific circumstances of the case
- outcomes in England and Wales are reported based on the time that the result was recorded in centrally-held management information. This is usually within a few days of an order being made, although longer delays occasionally occur
- in a small number of cases in England and Wales incomplete record keeping has meant that the outcome of a case has not been recorded. These cases have been denoted as 'Not recorded'. This clerical information has not previously been used for statistical purposes so efforts to improve and review the data capture each quarter are underway. We will ensure that information remains at the standard required of Official Statistics
- sanctions may be suspended (or additionally 'Sisted' or 'Continued' in Scotland). Essentially, this means a Paying Parent agrees to pay what is owed and a plan is put in place to do so. If the Paying Parent falters, then a sentence can be subsequently enforced and such instances will appear as additional outcomes in this table

June 2020 publication (Data to March 2020)

1. Data at arrangement level has transferred to the Department for Work and Pension's Stat-Xplore tool.

Stat-Xplore enables users to create customised statistical tables relating to arrangements on the Child Maintenance Service. New data on age and gender of Paying Parents, age of Receiving Parents and geographical breakdowns as low as census output areas have been released with users in mind.

Figures within Stat-Xplore are unrounded. However, a technique called perturbation has been used to randomly adjust cell values. Small random errors are introduced to cells although the information value of the table as a whole is not impaired. Random adjustment of the data is considered to be the most satisfactory technique for avoiding the release of identifiable data. Read more information on this technique.

In comparison, figures within the National Tables and the Release are rounded. Where the National Tables and the Release refer to Stat-Xplore numbers the usual rounding convention has been applied for consistency. This means it is possible that in a small number of arrangement figures will differ by 1 rounding unit (100) when perturbation and rounding is applied together.

Resultant changes to Excel tables from Stat-Xplore:

- redundant tables: The number of Paying Parents and their Child Maintenance Arrangements (formerly Table 4) has been removed from the National Tables. 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 References: table numbers have changed, as a result of bullet 1
- Shared Care (Table 6, formerly Table 7): arrangements broken down by shared care status is now available through Stat-Xplore. This part of the National Tables has been removed. The breakdown of children by shared care status still remains. There are future plans to move this onto Stat-Xplore
- Regional Tables: arrangements by region is now available through Stat-Xplore, and at a geographical breakdown as low as census output areas. The breakdown of children covered by Local Authority of the Paying Parent still remains, as part of the Regional Tables. There are future plans to move this onto StatXplore
- Geography: address information on Stat-Xplore and the Regional Tables has changed to a more robust data source. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of missing address records

2. Table 11.2: Enforcement Actions – Detail on Sanctions: Sanction applications in

Scotland are listed separately, as the legal system is significantly different to that in England & Wales. Cases in Scotland may be sisted or continued following a Paying Parent's agreement to pay Child Maintenance arrears. In practice, this means that the case is postponed to a later date or temporarily paused while the Paying Parent complies with such an agreement. The Child Maintenance Service may then ask for the case to be recalled and dismissed if the Paring Parent complies with the agreement, or referred back for a default hearing if not. The statistics published during March 2020 showed the number of continued and sisted cases and included such events as 'outcomes' in the total. This data has been withdrawn, as meaningful comparisons across time cannot be made, as the underlying report only includes cases that remained continued / sisted (i.e. had not been dismissed or resulted in a sanction being imposed) at the point of reporting.

3. 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. The new metric is thought to be more robust, because the numerator and denominator of the calculation include consistent cases from the same time period, and do not include cancelled cases. For transparency, the old metric has been included in the table for one final time; it will be removed in the September 2020 publication.

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.

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.gov.uk

Useful links

Find more information relating to arrangements on the Child Maintenance Service, available via the Department for Work and Pensions StatXplore tool.

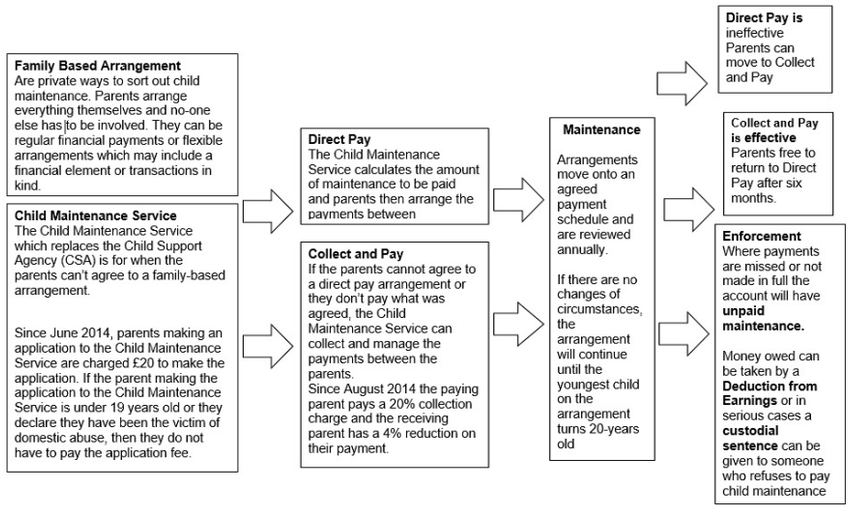
Read previous releases.

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.

Read further information and statistics on the performance and closure of the Child Support Agency.

Annex: CMS overview

Figure 1: High-level overview of the Child Maintenance Service



Overview of the Child Maintenance Service

Family-based arrangement

Family-based arrangements are private ways to sort out child maintenance. Parents arrange everything themselves and no-one else has to be involved. They can be regular financial payments or flexible arrangements which may include a financial element or transactions in kind.

Child Maintenance Service

The Child Maintenance Service which replaces the Child Support Agency (CSA) is for when the parents can't agree to a family-based arrangement.

Since June 2014, parents making an application to the Child Maintenance Service are charged £20 to make the application. If the parent making the application to the Child Maintenance Service is under 19 years old or they declare they have been the victim of domestic abuse, then they do not have to pay the application fee.

Direct Pay

The Child Maintenance Service calculates the amount of maintenance to be paid and parents then arrange the payments between themselves.

Collect and Pay

If the parents cannot agree to a direct pay arrangement or they do not pay what was agreed, the Child Maintenance Service can collect and manage the payments between the parents.

Since August 2014 the paying parent pays a 20% collection charge and the receiving parent has a 4% reduction on their payment.

Maintenance

Arrangements move onto an agreed payment schedule and are reviewed annually.

If there are no changes of circumstances, the arrangement will continue until the youngest child on the arrangement turns 20 years old

Direct Pay is ineffective

Parents can move to Collect and Pay.

Collect and Pay is effective

Parents free to return to Direct Pay after 6 months.

Enforcement

Where payments are missed or not made in full the account will have unpaid maintenance.

Money owed can be taken by a deduction from earnings or in serious cases a custodial sentence can be given to someone who refuses to pay child maintenance.

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