Department for Work and Pensions
Children and Families Analytical Team

Official Statistics

Child Support Agency quarterly summary of statistics: June 2020 (experimental)

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This is the latest release of statistics on the Child Support Agency, to June 2020. The release includes revisions to previously published statistics.

The next release is planned for January 2021.

1. Introduction

The Child Support Agency (CSA) was set up in 1993 and in 2012 the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) was introduced to run alongside the CSA to close the CSA to prospective, all-new paying liabilities (new ended and all cases held on the CSA caseload). The CMS is a service that helps parents to work out a child maintenance arrangement and helps them to pay and receive the CSA scheme. These services are provided by the CMS. The CSA is responsible for collecting and enforcing payments administered by offering a fixed charge of collection where this is possible or a reasonable cost to the taxpayer, as outlined in the child maintenance compliance and arrears strategy.

Effect of COVID-19

This publication is based on data up to the end of June 2020. During this period, the CMS was affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and the resultant changes to the operation of the business. In the UK, the lockdown began on 23 March 2020.

2. Main Stories

The number of CSA cases before 2012 or CMS if options decreased from 97,700 in March 2020 to 75,900 in June 2020. The caseload has been steadily decreasing since the CSA closed to new cases in March 2012 (see Figure 1). The reductions in caseload are due to the impact of cases on sufficient child maintenance compliance and arrears strategy. All cases on the CSA computer system have been closed.

The CSA historical debt balance continues to reduce. The amount of CSA debt written off in the quarter ending June 2020 increased to £1.5 billion, from £1.2 billion (£0.9 billion in June 2019). The amount of outstanding debt has been steadily decreasing since December 2016 and declining sharply since September 2019. The reduction in outstanding debt is due to the reasonable cost being not collected or written off.

Between 13 December 2018, when the compliance and arrears strategy work started, and 30 June 2020:

- the CSA has written 31,250 parents with care to ask if they want a child maintenance service, of which 14,400 (46%) have made a new application to the CMS (parents with an eligible case on the CSA system and 16,400 parents with a case on the CMS system)
- 2,400 (8%) of the parents with care contacted cases had the debt adjusted or written off, of which 50,000 cases on the CMS system - system cases showed the cases had a total debt value of £55.6 million, of which £852.4 million was deemed uncollectable.

3. What you need to know

Child maintenance is financial support between separated parents to help with the costs of bringing up a child.

The parent with care (PWC) is the parent with the main day-to-day care of the child(ren) and receives child maintenance. The non-resident parent (NRP) is the parent who pays child maintenance.

Some CSA historical debt balances are adjusted either because the debt has been written off or because the debt is deemed uncollectable. Debt is written off either because the parent with care (PWC) or the non-resident parent (NRP) has asked for the debt to be written off, it would cost more to collect the debt than it is worth, or the debt has been deemed uncollectable.

Representation is the process of writing to parents to ask if they want to a child maintenance service. Representation is the first step in the process, which is effective to do so.

This publication covers CSA child maintenance cases which have historical debt, and cases on the CSA system with no debt. Cases on the CSA system with no debt (PTO) computer system to make the transition to CMS systems. It does not cover cases which originated in the Child Maintenance Service.

Compliance and Arrears Strategy

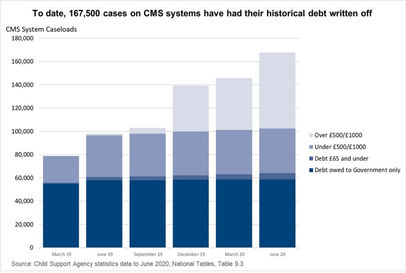
The child maintenance compliance and arrears strategy sets out how the Child Support Agency (CSA) and Child Maintenance Service (CMS) collect and enforce payments. The CSA will write to the PWC to ask if they want a child maintenance service. It is important that the CSA and CMS are able to collect the debt and write off debt. The CSA will write to the PWC to ask if they want a child maintenance service. The CSA will write to the PWC to ask if they want a child maintenance service. The CSA will write to the PWC to ask if they want a child maintenance service

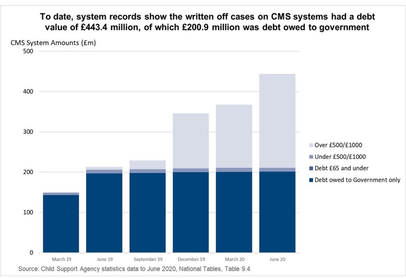
CSA debt written off on CMS systems

As of June 2020, there were 167,500 Child Support Agency cases held on CMS IT systems which have had their historical arrears adjusted or written off since the start of the compliance and arrears programme activity on 13 December 2018. These cases had system records showing a total debt value of £443.4 million. Of these:

- 58,800 (35%) cases had system records showing debt which was owed to government only with a total value of £200.9 million
- 5,200 (3%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents of £65 or under with a total value of £0.1 million
- 38,400 (23%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents of £500/£1,000 or less (depending on the start date of the case) with a total value of £9.6 million
- 65,200 (39%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents which was more than £500/£1,000 (depending on the start date of the case) with a total value of £232.8 million – in these cases, either we were unable to trace the PWC, the PWC did not ask for the debt to be collected, the debt has been adjusted due to corrections or production of evidence that payment has been made, or the debt has been deemed uncollectable

Some cases which are eligible for representation have not yet completed the process (more detail about PWC representation). See Tables 9.3 and 9.4 of the national tables for full data.





7. About these statistics

Caseload figures contained within this publication are rounded to the nearest hundred or percent. Amounts are rounded to the nearest hundred thousand. These statistics have been developed using guidelines set out by the UK Statistics Authority.

The statistics have been produced using new data and a new methodology which is still subject to on-going development and testing and they may therefore be revised in future publications. For this reason, they are badged as experimental statistics. Always refer to the most recent release for the most up to date statistics.

A number of cases had their debt adjusted prior to 13th December 2018 as part of the case closure programme. These adjustments were reported in the Child Support Agency case closure statistics.

8. Where to find out more

Find more information relating to Child Support Agency cases, available via the National Data Tables

Read previous releases of these statistics.

Read information relating to the Child Support Agency case closure statistics.

Read guidance on the compliance and arrears strategy.

Read the consultation outcome of the compliance and arrears strategy.

Some statistics on debt that has been transferred from the CSA to the Child Maintenance Service are sourced from the 1993 and 2003 Child Maintenance Schemes Client Funds Accounts.

Read statistics on the performance of the Child Maintenance Service.

Read details on child maintenance arrangements made after speaking to the Child Maintenance Options service, including family based arrangements.

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Feedback is welcome, send comments to: cm.analysis.research@dwp.gov.uk

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