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Official Statistics

Child Maintenance Service statistics: data to March 2026

Updated 30 June 2026

Applies to England, Scotland and Wales

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This is the latest release of statistics on the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) for Great Britain between January 2015 and March 2026. The release includes minor revisions to previously published statistics.

1. Main stories

In the quarter March 2026:

- the CMS received 38,000 new applications, down 4,300 compared with the quarter to March 2025
- 1.1 million children were covered by CMS arrangements, an increase of 44,000 since the quarter to March 2025
- the Child Maintenance Service managed 810,000 arrangements
- of Paying Parents using Collect and Pay, 77% paid some maintenance. Of this group:
 - 23% paid up to 90% of the maintenance due for the quarter
 - 54% paid over 90% of the maintenance due for the quarter

2. What you need to know

Child maintenance is financial support, towards a child's everyday living costs, that a parent without the main day-to-day care of the child, (Paying Parent), provides to the other parent, (Receiving Parent).

Separated parents can arrange child maintenance themselves. This is called a family-based arrangement and is a private way to agree child maintenance. Family-based arrangements are not covered by this release.

The CMS offers two levels of service:

- Direct Pay – the CMS calculates the amount of maintenance to be paid, and parents arrange payments between themselves
- Collect and Pay – the CMS will collect and manage payments between the parents when parents cannot arrange payments between themselves, or if the

Paying Parent does not keep up with payments

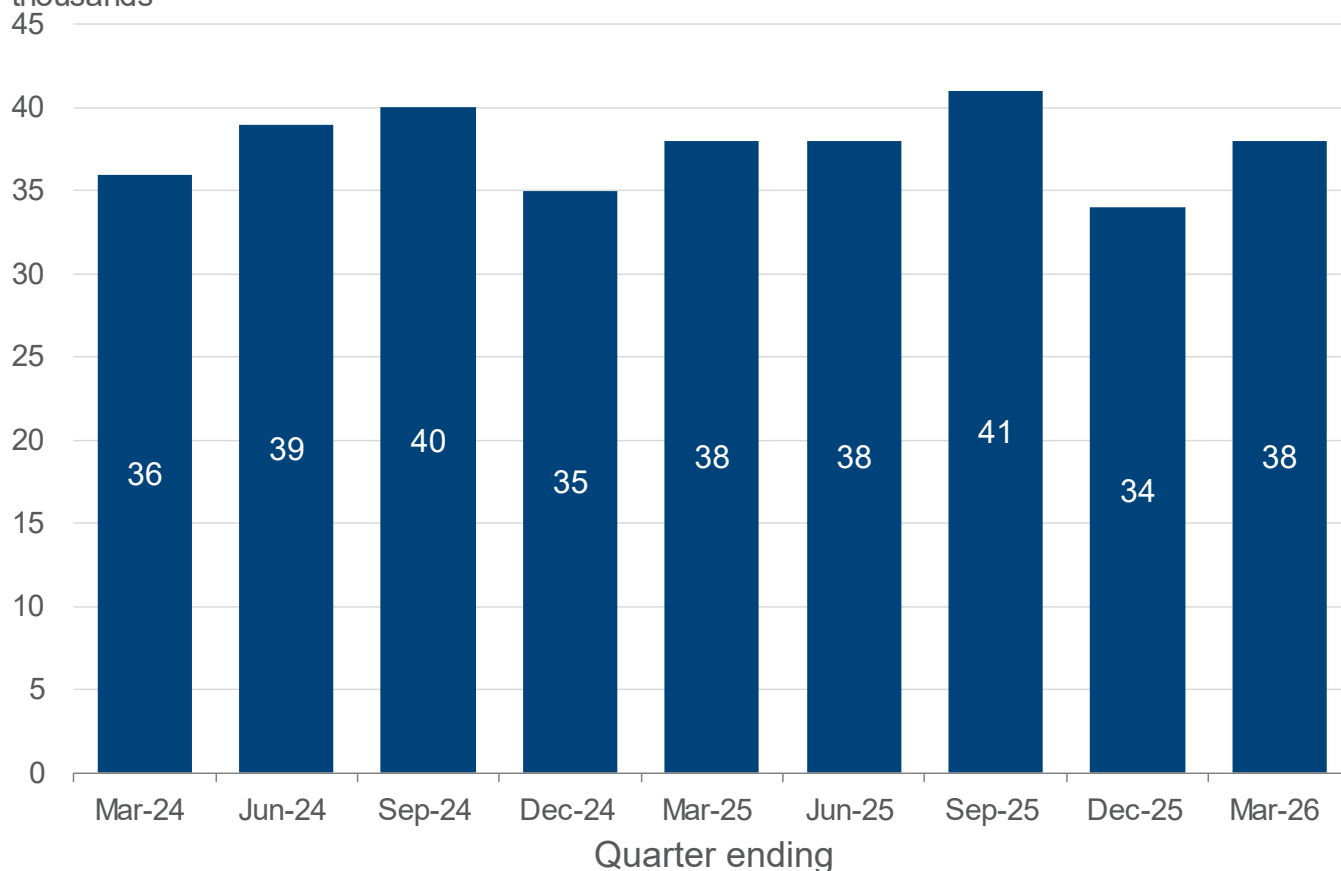
Further detail on the CMS is provided in the [About these statistics](#) section of this release

3. Applications to the Child Maintenance Service

In the year to March 2026 there were 150,000 new applications to the CMS, a decrease of 1% from the year ending March 2025.

Applications to the Child Maintenance Service, quarters ending March 2024 to March 2026

New arrangements in quarter
thousands



Source: [Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2026, National Tables, table 2](#)

In the quarter ending March 2026, there were 38,000 new applications to the CMS.

At the end of March 2026, the CMS was managing 810,000 arrangements for 730,000 Paying Parents. There has been a 6% increase in the number of arrangements since the end of March 2025.

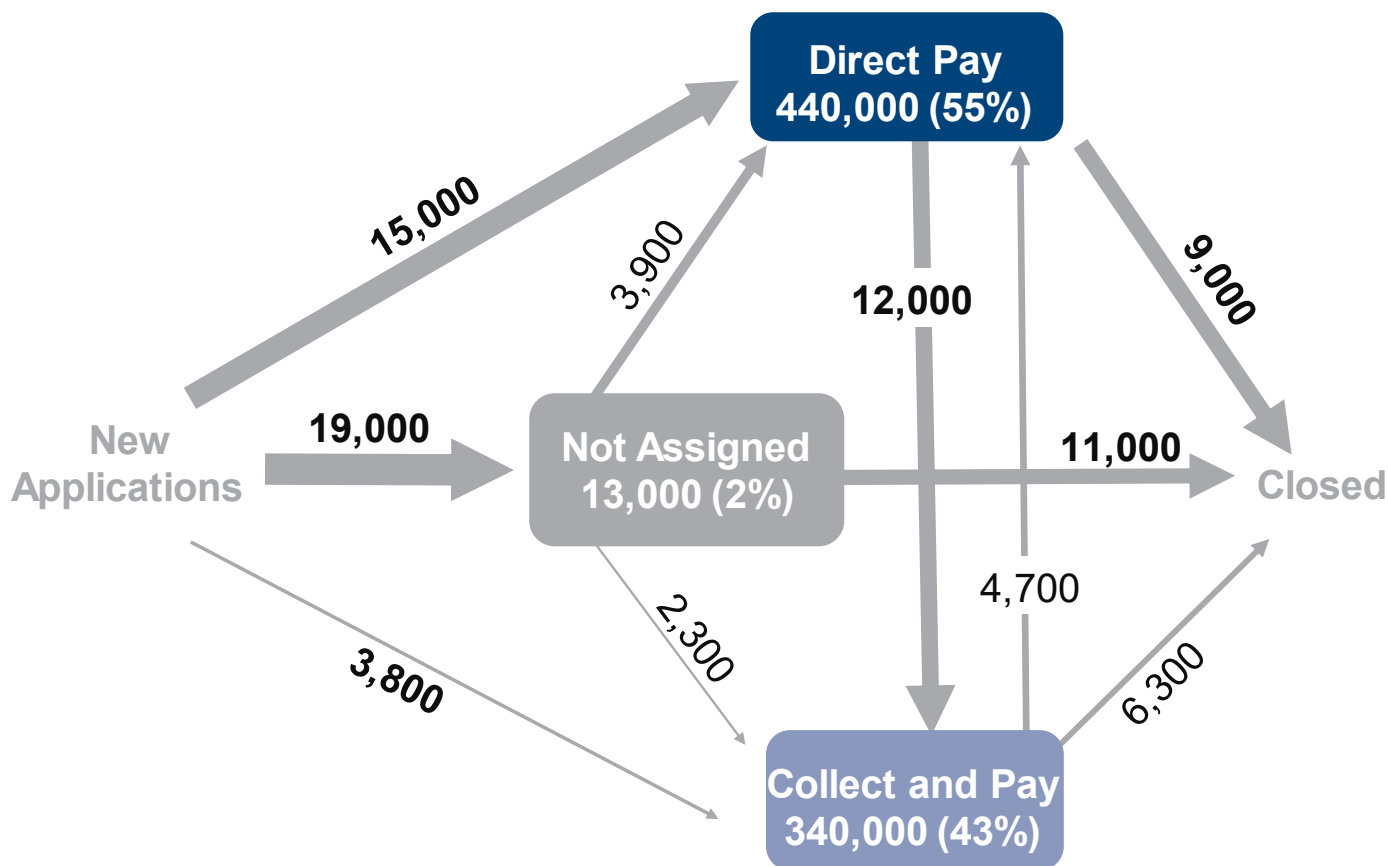
See tables 1 to 2 of the [national tables](#) for more information on applications.

See [Stat-Xplore](#) for more information on arrangements and Paying Parents.

4. Composition of Arrangements on the Child Maintenance Service

In the quarter ending March 2026, the Child Maintenance Service managed 810,000 arrangements. This is a growth of 2% since the quarter ending December 2025.

Flow of arrangements on the Child Maintenance Service, quarter ending March 2026



Source: [Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2026, National Tables, table 3](#)

Data on the flow of arrangements around the CMS in the quarter ending March 2026 shows:

- of those new applicants who have been assigned, most new applicants start on Direct Pay: 15,000 new applicants joined Direct Pay during the quarter
- 55% of all CMS arrangements use Direct Pay, with 43% using Collect and Pay
- 9,000 Direct Pay arrangements have closed
- 12,000 arrangements moved from Direct Pay to Collect and Pay
- the number of arrangements not yet assigned to a service has increased to 13,000 from 11,000 last quarter. The proportion of arrangements that are not yet assigned to a service type accounts for 2% of all arrangements

See table 3 of the [national tables](#)

See [Stat-Xplore](#) for more information on arrangements.

5. Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service

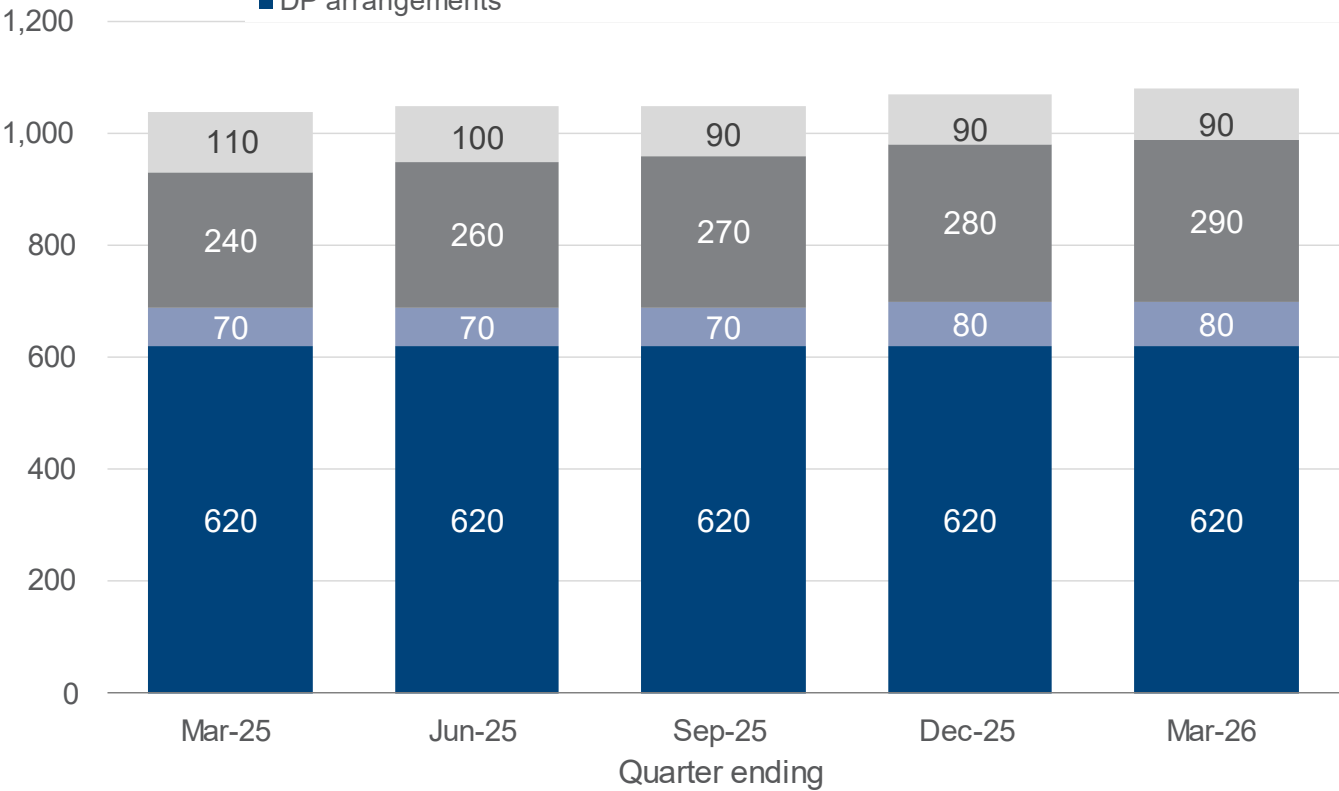
In the quarter ending March 2026, 1.1 million children were covered by CMS arrangements, an increase of 44,000 from the quarter ending March 2025.

Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service, quarters ending March 2025 to March 2026

Children covered by:

- C&P where no maintenance was paid in the quarter
- C&P arrangements where some maintenance was paid in the quarter
- C&P arrangements where the Paying Parent had no ongoing liability during the quarter
- DP arrangements

thousands



Source: Child Maintenance Service Children data, available on [Stat-Xplore](#)

At the end of March 2026:

- 620,000 children were covered by 450,000 Direct Pay arrangements
- 450,000 children were covered by 350,000 Collect and Pay arrangements
 - 290,000 of these children were covered by 210,000 Collect and Pay arrangements where the Paying Parent paid some maintenance during the quarter

- 86,000 of these children were covered by 61,000 Collect and Pay arrangements where no maintenance was paid during the quarter
- 76,000 of these children were covered by Collect and Pay arrangements where the Paying Parent had no ongoing liability during the quarter. There were 83,000 such arrangements, which includes cases where the Paying Parent has a nil assessment due to their circumstances; or the Paying Parent's requirement to support their children has ended, but the case remains open due to outstanding arrears. If no liability exists, Paying Parents will be included in this group even if they have contributed towards paying off arrears
- 17,000 children were not yet assigned to a service

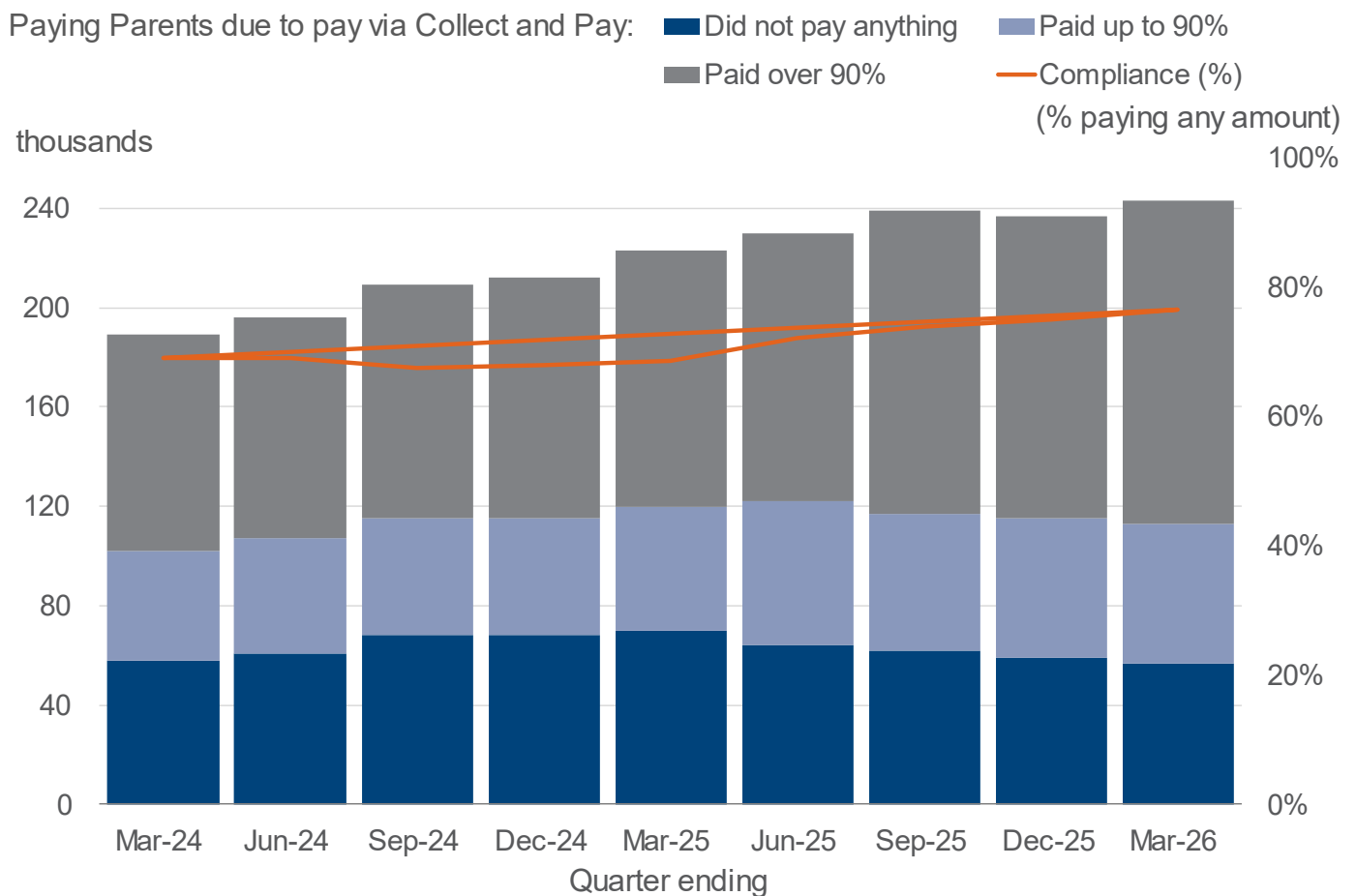
See [Stat-Xplore](#) for more information on children.

6. Paying Parents and the Collect and Pay service

This section defines compliance as any money paid towards child maintenance due on a Paying Parent's case.

This includes Paying Parents transferred from the Direct Pay service because they have not kept up with payments.

Compliance rate of Paying Parents on the Collect and Pay Service, quarters ending March 2024 to March 2026



Source: Child Maintenance Service Paying Parents data, available on [Stat-Xplore](#)

In the quarter ending March 2026, of 240,000 Paying Parents due to pay via the Collect and Pay service:

- 57,000 (23%) paid no maintenance
- 190,000 (77%) paid some maintenance. Of those paying maintenance:
 - 56,000 (23%) paid up to 90% of the maintenance due for the quarter (further breakdowns of this group are available on Stat- Xplore)
 - 130,000 (54%) paid over 90% of the maintenance due for the quarter

There has been a 2-percentage point increase in Paying Parents paying some maintenance during the quarter, and a 1-percentage point increase in Paying Parents paying over 90% of maintenance due for the quarter, compared to the previous quarter.

There was an increase of 5 percentage points in Paying Parents paying some maintenance between the quarters ending March 2025 to September 2025. This increase should be considered in the context of the April 2025 change that placed Child Maintenance deductions at the top of the Universal Credit deduction priority order. This change means that CMS are now more likely to successfully collect

payments from Paying Parents who use the Collect and Pay service, have no earnings, and are claiming UC. This started to affect CMS payment receipts in the middle of June 2025. The change was introduced on a temporary basis in April 2025 but was made permanent in April 2026.

Under this change, CM deductions are now the highest in the UC deduction order and can exceed the 15% UC deductions limit when appropriate. This has resulted in more UC deduction from benefit payments being received.

Further detail on compliance is provided in the [About these statistics](#) section of this release.

See [Stat-Xplore](#) for more information on Paying Parents

7. Paying Parents characteristics

In the quarter ending March 2026, of the 730,000 Paying Parents:

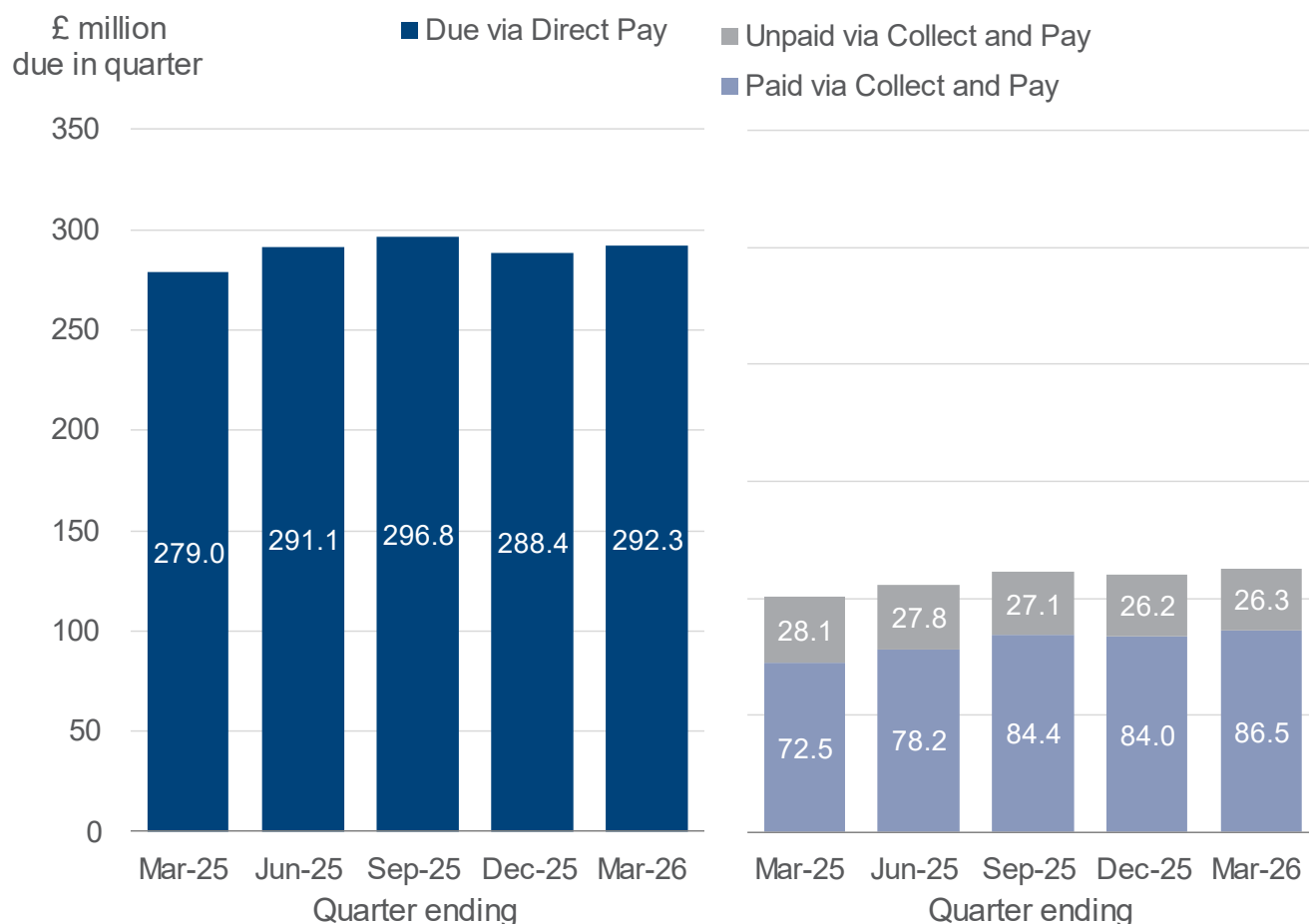
- 93% were recorded as male
- nearly three-quarters (73%) were between the ages of 30 and 49
- 41% had 2 or more qualifying children
- of those who had 2 or more qualifying children, 79% had 1 arrangement and 21% had 2 or more arrangements

See [Stat-Xplore](#) for more information on Paying Parents

8. Child Maintenance due and paid

The CMS monitors payments made through the Collect and Pay service only .

**Child Maintenance due and paid each quarter,
quarters ending March 2025 to March 2026**



Source: [Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2026, National Tables, table 4](#)

During the quarter ending March 2026, £405.1 million child maintenance was due to be paid either via the Direct Pay service or the Collect and Pay service.

- £292.3 million was arranged through the Direct Pay service
- the DWP does not measure the compliance of Paying Parents on the Direct Pay service
- £112.8 million was arranged through the Collect and Pay service:
 - £86.5 million was paid
 - £26.3 million was unpaid

There was a 17% increase in the amount of money arranged to be paid through Collect and Pay from £376.1 million arranged in the year ending March 2025 to £440.6 million in the year ending March 2026.

Since 2012, when the CMS began, £791.2 million in unpaid maintenance has accumulated. This amounts to 7% of all maintenance due to be paid since the start of the service.

Due to the complexity of the CMS 2012 system, it has emerged that some of the maintenance arranged has been miscategorised (approximately 2% of debt). From the quarter ending December 2024, this figure is calculated using a new method. On 12 December 2024, the CMS Client Fund Annual Accounts publicly explained the issues around the CMS 2012 scheme data in relation to this figure.

See tables 4 and 5 of the [national tables](#) for more information.

9. Enforcement

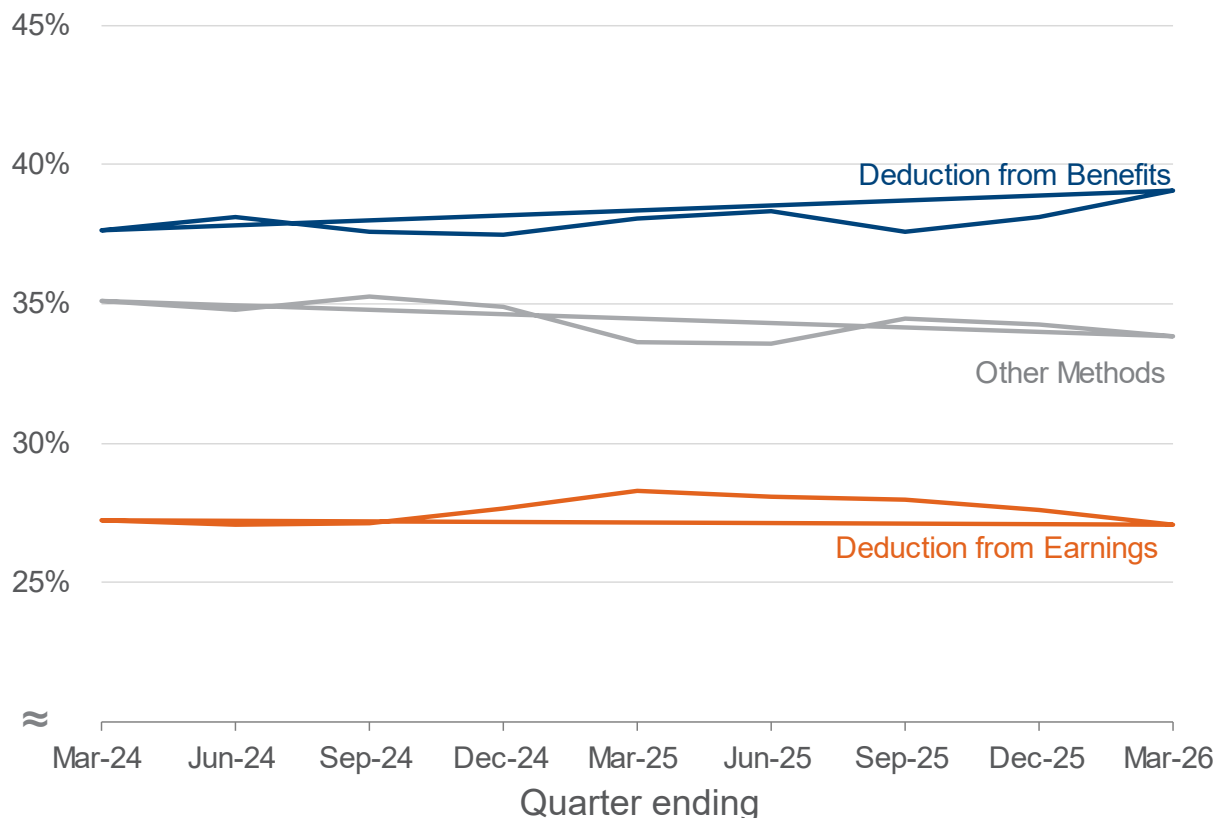
The CMS can enforce the collection of child maintenance for those on Collect and Pay through:

- deduction from earnings orders and requests
- deduction from benefits
- deduction orders, or
- courts

Regular collection of ongoing maintenance can be enforced through deductions from earnings or benefits. The Paying Parent may also opt to use these methods voluntarily.

Methods of Payment used on the Collect and Pay Service, quarters ending March 2024 to March 2026

Percentage of Parents on Collect and Pay



Source: Child Maintenance Service Paying Parents data, available on [Stat-Xplore](#)

In the quarter ending March 2026, of 240,000 Paying Parents due to pay via the Collect and Pay service:

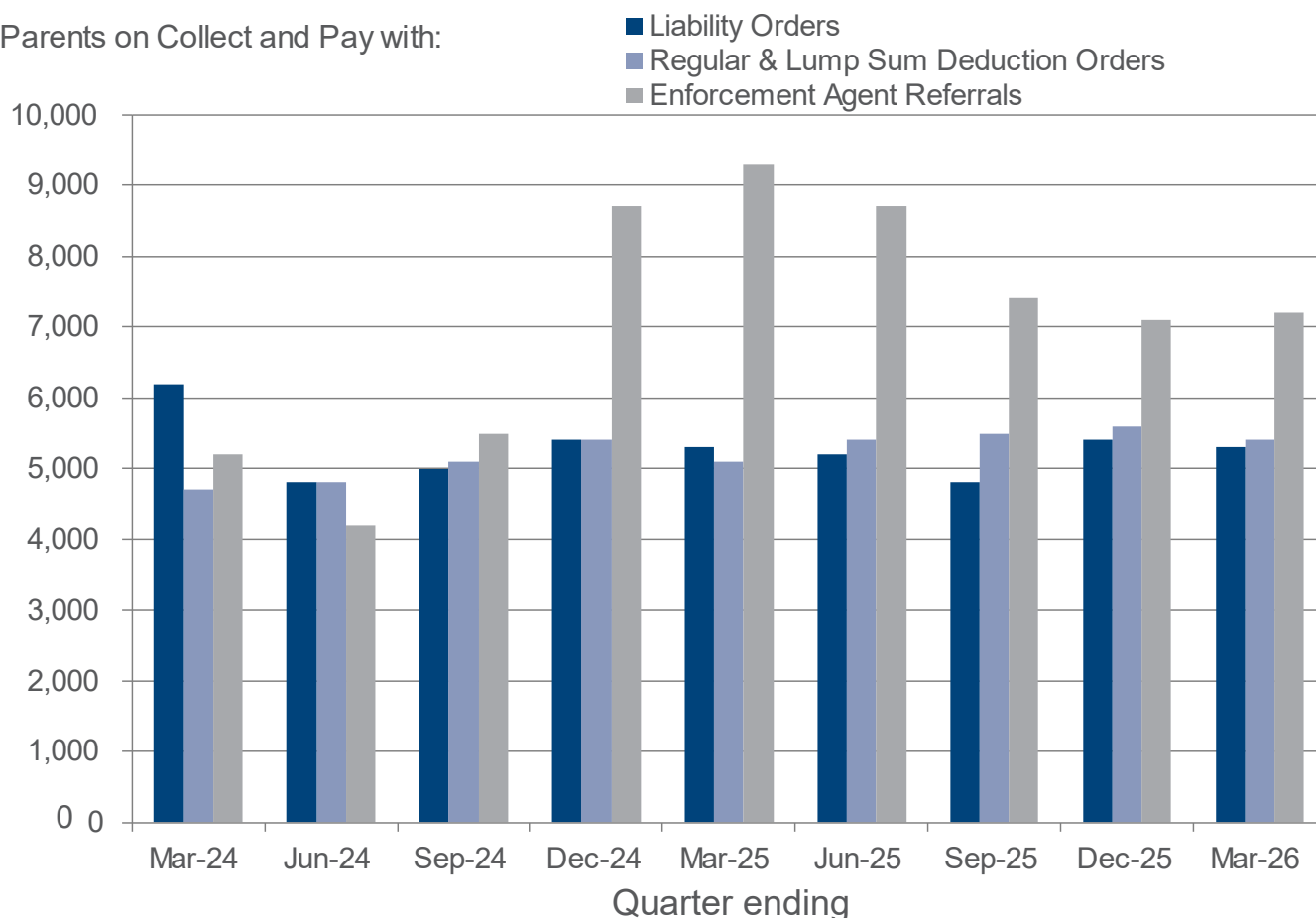
- 66,000 (27%) had a deduction from earnings order or request in place
- 95,000 (39%) were due to pay via deduction from benefits
- 82,000 (34%) were due to pay via other methods of payment, predominantly default standing orders

See [Stat-Xplore](#) for more information on payment methods.

The CMS may pursue unpaid maintenance through liability orders granted by the courts. Liability orders allow legal action to be taken, such as referral to enforcement agents, who can seize goods and sell them to cover any unpaid maintenance and costs.

Deduction Orders and Civil Enforcement Actions in process, quarters ending March 2024 to March 2026

Parents on Collect and Pay with:



Source: [Child Maintenance Service statistics data to March 2026, National Tables, table 6.1](#)

At the end of March 2026:

- 5,300 liability orders were in process
- 5,400 regular or lump sum deduction orders were in process
- 7,200 enforcement agent referrals were in process

In the past year to March 2026, the CMS has collected £5.2 million from Paying Parents with a sanctions action in process.

A Paying Parent is described as having a sanctions action in process when a service request is raised to formally consider applying sanctions to a Paying Parent. Not all such cases will result in an application being made to courts.

See tables 6.1 and 6.2 of the [national tables](#) for more information.

Further detail on enforcement is provided in the [About these statistics](#) section of this release.

10. About these statistics

The Child Maintenance Service

The CMS was introduced in December 2012 as part of the government's Child Maintenance Reforms. It replaced the Child Support Agency (CSA). All CSA arrangements with an ongoing liability were closed by December 2018. Parents were then encouraged to make a new family-based arrangement or an arrangement through the CMS.

Before applying to the CMS, parents must use the Get Help Arranging Child Maintenance (GHACM) service. GHACM is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements. GHACM was introduced in November 2021 and replaced Child Maintenance Options.

When a parent makes an application to the CMS, they will be told how much child maintenance should be paid.

Direct Pay

Direct Pay can be chosen by either parent with the other's agreement. Neither parent pays collection fees under Direct Pay.

After a new Direct Pay arrangement has been set up, the system will monitor the case for the duration of two scheduled payments. Text and email prompts will be sent to both customers during this time to encourage payment.

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 CMS to switch the case to the Collect and Pay service.

Collect and Pay

The CMS calculates the amount of maintenance due (including the recovery of any unpaid maintenance that may have built up under the Direct Pay service), collects maintenance from the Paying Parent, and pays it to the Receiving Parent.

There are ongoing collection charges for use of the Collect and Pay service, payable by both:

- the Paying Parent (20% charged on top of the maintenance amount)
- the Receiving Parent (4% taken out of the maintenance amount)

Non-compliance under the Collect and Pay service can lead to the use of enforcement powers.

Enforcement

When a payment is missed, the CMS contacts the Paying Parent to arrange a recovery of what is owed and 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, the arrangement must be switched to the Collect and Pay service before any enforcement action can commence.

The CMS can enforce the collection of child maintenance in four major ways:

- deduction from Earnings Order or Request – money is recovered from the Paying Parent's earnings via their employer, who will be instructed on the amount to deduct
- deduction from Benefit – money is recovered from the Paying Parent's benefits
- deduction Order – money is deducted directly from the Paying Parent's bank or building society account
- courts – a Paying Parent can be taken to court over unpaid maintenance

The CMS may pursue unpaid maintenance through Liability Orders granted by the courts. Liability Orders allow legal action to be taken, which will depend on the individual case. These actions include:

- referral to Enforcement Agents
- registering a Paying Parent's debt on the Register of Judgments, Orders and Fines
- using an order for sale to sell a Paying Parent's property or assets
- stopping the Paying Parent obtaining or retaining a driving licence or passport
- sending the Paying Parent to prison

Sanctions are only used when every other method of recovering unpaid child maintenance has been attempted. The CMS only pursues these sanctions when they believe the Paying Parent can pay but are refusing to do so.

Definitions

Children covered

Children covered is the number of children for whom the Paying Parent has a child maintenance arrangement.

Qualifying children

Counts of qualifying children include all children who are associated with an open arrangement and are below 20 years of age. Some children aged 16 or above, may not always be considered qualifying children for the purpose of calculating the Paying Parent's liability. See the background information note to these statistics for more details.

Compliance

This measures how much maintenance has been successfully collected from the Paying Parent compared to the amount of new maintenance arranged via the Collect and Pay service in that three-month period.

Note that, if a parent is trying to settle arrears that have previously accumulated, they would need to pay more than the amount of new maintenance arranged during the quarter.

Parents paying over 90% are grouped together because even if a Paying Parent is fully complying with an arrangement, their compliance rate may not be exactly 100%. This is due to differences between how liability accumulates on the CMS Liability Schedule (used to calculate the amount due) and how collections are scheduled in practice. This group also includes Paying Parents who have paid more than 100% of

their liability for the quarter, to pay off arrears that they have previously accumulated.

See the [Background Information document](#) for more details.

Comparisons

Comparisons between these statistics on the CMS and [statistics previously published on the Child Support Agency](#) or CSA Table 1 (Paying Parents with CSA Arrears), which is published alongside the CMS statistics, should not be made as the two services have different aims and cover different groups.

The CMS launched in 2012 and is designed to support separated families to come to their own financial arrangements. Child Maintenance Options was created to support parents to set up collaborative, family-based arrangements. In November 2021 Child Maintenance Options was replaced with GHACM.

Rounding

Percentages are calculated using numbers prior to rounding and rounded to the nearest whole percentage point. Amounts have been rounded to the nearest £100,000. Volumes have been rounded as detailed below, in some cases a lower level of rounding may be applied to explain the difference between volumes.

Range	Rounded to the nearest
0 to 1,000	10
1,001 to 10,000	100
10,001 to 100,000	1,000
100,001 to 1,000,000	10,000
1,000,001 to 10,000,000	100,000
10,000,001 to 100,000,000	1,000,000

Release schedule

This release is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December.

The next release is planned for 29 September 2026.

Changes made to this publication

In this release we have introduced an additional category, “Collect and Pay – no liability due,” to improve the clarity and robustness of the published statistics. This new category separately identifies cases where no payment is expected, preventing them from being grouped with genuine non-payment cases and ensures a more accurate reflection of compliance.

Where to find out more

Read the [Background Information document](#) for more details on the CMS statistics.

Read [previous releases](#) of these statistics.

Related statistics:

- [Child Maintenance Client Fund Annual Accounts](#) for more details on financial figures.
- [Child maintenance facts and figures](#) for more details on Separated families statistics and historical Child Maintenance Options, and CSA statistics.
- [DWP Complaints Official Statistics](#) for detail on Child Maintenance complaints.

11. Future Development and Your Feedback

Planned Changes

None.

Feedback and queries

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

If you have any views on the above changes, queries or feedback on any aspect of our statistics please email cm.analysis.research@dwp.gov.uk

For media enquiries on these statistics, please contact the [DWP press office](#)

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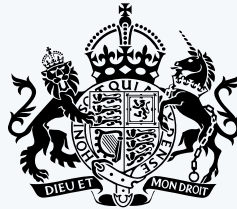
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