Department for Work & Pensions

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

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1. Introduction

The Child Maintenance Service was introduced in December 2012 as part of the government's Child Maintenance reforms. It replaced the Child Support Agency (CSA), which had accepted parents with a court order or private child maintenance between 1993 and 2012.

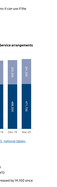
Direct Pay is where the Child Maintenance Service calculates the amount of maintenance to be paid and parents arrange the payments between themselves.

Payments cannot do this or they do not pay what was agreed, then the Child Maintenance Service can enforce 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 B.

- 47% of children covered through Direct Pay arrangements
- 291,000 children covered through the Collect and Pay Service
- 8,800 children not yet assigned to a service (not shown in chart)

The number of children covered by the Direct Pay service has increased by 14,100 since December 2012.

Figure 2: Compliance on the Collect and Pay service is at 68%

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

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 the impact of COVID-19 is not fully reflected in the data, we comment on the figures where appropriate to the relevant. We expect that the impact will be clearer both internally 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 make the payments between them.

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

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 has the victim of abuse
- 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.

DG Child Support Agreements with an ongoing liability were closed by December 2019. Parents with these agreements could request a family-based arrangement or an arrangement through the Child Maintenance Service. However, the Child Maintenance Service could not accept applications from such parents, as they may have had a family-based arrangement in the past.

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

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

Throughout 2019, the rate of applications joining the service continued to decline in line with the downward trend. However, in the last quarter, ending March 2020, the number of applications joining the Child Maintenance Service increased slightly.

At the end of March 2020, the Child Maintenance Service was managing 915,000 arrangements for 663,000 Paying Parents. This is a 49,000 increase in the number of arrangements since the end of March 2019.

See tables T1 and T2 of the national tables for more information.

See Glossary for more information on arrangements.

5. Composition of cases on the Child Maintenance Service

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. We service a case where the Paying Parent has agreed to pay the amount we have set under Direct Pay arrangement, and at least annual review, to check that the arrangement is still meeting their requirements.

If 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 parent.

This service collects and manages payments between the parents. This includes recovery of any arrears if the Paying Parent does not pay on time.

We could review the case at a discretionary review. To see 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 make a family arrangement.

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 A.

Each row in 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 and 5,400 cases left Collect and Pay. Cases that ceased to have a child maintenance liability are excluded from this diagram, but can be found in table A of the national tables.

Arrangements may not be assigned to a service type for a short period following application, for example, while we wait for further information from the applicants, 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 while recovery action begins.

Figure 5 shows:

- more new applications chosen to start on Direct Pay (5,900 new applications compared to 5,400 for Collect and Pay) in March 2020
- 43% of all Child Maintenance Service arrangements use Direct Pay, with 31% using Collect and Pay
- more parents move from Direct Pay to Collect and Pay than the other way around (5,400 compared to 5,400) in the quarter ending March 2020
- more arrangements joined the service than left, the number of arrangements increasing by 5,700 during this quarter

See table A of the national tables for more information.

See Flow for more information on arrangements.

6. Children covered by the Child Maintenance Service

Figure 6: Children covered by Child Maintenance Service arrangements, March 2012 to March 2020

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

For presentational reasons, a small number of children, who are covered by arrangements that have ceased, are not included in the chart and in the table. 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:

- 471,700 children were covered by 322,900 Direct Pay arrangements
- 291,000 children were covered by 185,300 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. 51% 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 49%, respectively in March 2019).

See table D of the national 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 B.

In the quarter ending March 2020, 100,200 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 B of the national 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 we can take enforcement action. Parents can choose to use the Collect and Pay service (which charges a fee) or pay the Collect and Pay service charges on behalf of Paying Parents who are too deep in debt.

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 B.

As a result of problems with data feeds, the figures in this chart for the quarter ending December 2018 are incomplete. More detail about this is available in the background information document.

During the quarter ending March 2020, £363.8 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.

- £187.9 million due to be paid through Direct Pay arrangements
- £55.2 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, £364.2 million in unpaid maintenance is owed through the Collect and Pay service. This amounts to 10% of all maintenance due to be paid through the service. This includes £64.7 million unpaid maintenance transferred from Direct Pay to Collect and Pay.

See tables E and G of the national 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 the missed payment), we can require 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 received from the paying parent's employer through their payroll. This is the most effective and cost-efficient
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 the 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 being prison, quarters ending March 2018 to March 2020

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

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 T1 and T2 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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