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

Official statistics

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

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Main Stories
3. What you need to know
4. Parent with care representation process
5. Non-resident parent representation process
6. CSA debt written off
7. Compliance and Arrears Strategy
8. Parent with care representation process on CSA Systems
9. Where to find out more

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

The next release is planned for October 2020.

1. Introduction

The Child Support Agency (CSA) was set up in 1993 and in 2012 the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) was created to replace the CSA. The closure of the CSA's caseload is an ongoing statistics time-limited and all cases held on the CSA IT systems have been closed. The CMS is now the only organisation that can accept new cases. All cases on the CSA schemes, as well as new cases have been moved onto the CMS IT systems. This has enabled the CMS to provide a seamless service to customers and to make it as possible as a reasonable cost to the taxpayer, as outlined in the child maintenance compliance and arrears strategy.

2. Main Stories

The number of CSA cases held on CSA or CMS IT systems decreased from 140,200 in December 2019 to 67,000 in March 2020. All cases on the CSA computer system have been closed and are being managed on the CMS IT system. Details of cases as outlined in the child maintenance compliance and arrears strategy.

The CSA historical debt balance continues to reduce. The amount of CSA debt held on CSA IT systems has reduced from an estimated £3.7 billion in December 2019 to £3.5 billion in March 2020. Debt owed to the Secretary of State and debt which has no recoverable chance of being collected is written off.

Between 1 December 2019, when the compliance and arrears strategy was started, and 31 March 2020:

- the CSA was written to 209,700 parents with care to see if they want a last attempt at collecting child support owed to them. This includes 67,000 cases on the CSA IT system and 142,700 cases held on the CMS IT system.
- 159,100 cases with no recovery historical debt have had the debt adjusted or written off. This includes 67,000 cases on the CSA IT system and 92,100 cases on the CMS IT system. Debt owed to government and debt which has no recoverable chance of being collected is written off.
- 92,100 cases with no recovery historical debt have had the debt adjusted or written off. This includes 67,000 cases on the CSA IT system and 25,100 cases on the CMS IT system.
- 67,000 cases on the CSA IT system have had their debt adjusted or written off.

Figure 1: CSA caseload has decreased by 67,700 from 140,200 in December 2019

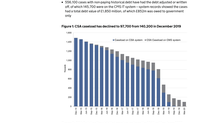
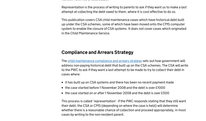


Figure 2: CSA Outstanding debt balance has reduced to £3.460 million from £3.76 million in December 2019



3. What you need to know

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

The parent with care (PWC) is the parent with the main day to day care of the children. The non-resident parent (NRP) is the parent who does not have the main day to day care of the children.

Some CSA historical debt balances are adjusted when because the debt has already been paid, or it was uncollectable. Some CSA historical debt is written off when because the parent with care has told us they do not want this debt or did not respond to our last attempt to collect child support owed to them or because the debt has been uncollectable.

Representation in the process of working to parents to see if they want us to make a last attempt at collecting child support owed to them, where it is cost effective to do so.

This publication covers CSA child maintenance cases which have historical debt built up under the CSA scheme, cases which have moved onto the CMS IT system and cases which have been closed on the CSA 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 government will ensure parents meet their responsibilities to pay child support. The CMS has the ability to the PWC to ask if they want a last attempt to be made to try to collect child support in cases where:

- it has built up on CSA systems and there has been no recent payment made
- the case started before 1 December 2008 and the debt is over £500
- the case started on or after 1 November 2008 and the debt over £1000

This process is called 'representation'. If the PWC responds stating that they still want us to try to collect the child support owed, the CMS will contact the non-resident parent whether there is reasonable chance of collection and proceed appropriately. In most cases by writing to the non-resident parent.

Debt one thousand pounds or less (£1000) for older cases will be written off. We will not ask parents in these cases if they want their debt collected, as collection activity is not cost effective. Debt over £1000 will be written off if we have tried to contact the parents supporting and their additional case have been identified as being in extreme financial difficulty or hardship.

All £4,763 cases have completed the parent with care representation process.

Of the 143,700 cases that have completed the process:

- 67,000 cases (3%) are were unable to force the PWC
- 2,700 cases (2%) were unable to progress because the NRP's deceased
- 1,300 cases (1%) were unable to force the NRP's deceased
- 1,400 (0.0%) cases parents have asked us to attempt collection of the debt owed. These cases have progressed into the non-resident parent representation process on CSA systems. See Table 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 of the national tables for full data.
- 4,100 (0.0%) cases parents have asked us to attempt collection of the debt owed. These cases have progressed into the non-resident parent representation process on CMS systems. See Table 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 of the national tables for full data.
- 4,763 (0.0%) cases parents have either told us that the PWC does not want us to collect the debt, or have responded to the letter or reminder within 60 days of the first letter

Figure 3: Overall, 43% of parents (33,700) who have completed the PWC representation process on the CSA systems asked for an attempt to be made to collect the debt owed

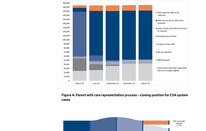


Figure 4: Parent with care representation process – closing position for CSA system cases

Parent with care representation process on CMS Systems

84,900 cases held on CMS systems and eligible for representation had started the parent with care representation process by the end of March 2020.

Of the 84,900 cases, 24,000 cases that have started the process:

- 9,100 cases (38%) are have been forced to the PWC
- 200 cases (0%) were unable to progress because the NRP's deceased
- 100 cases (0%) were unable to force the NRP because the NRP's deceased
- 15,200 (64%) cases we have written to the PWC and of these cases:
  - 14,100 (59%) cases parents have asked us to attempt collection of the debt owed. These cases have progressed into the non-resident parent representation process on CMS systems. See Table 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 of the national tables for full data.
  - 1,100 (5%) cases parents have either told us that the PWC does not want us to collect the debt, or have responded to the letter or reminder within 60 days of the first letter being issued

Figure 5: Parent with care representation process – CMS system cases

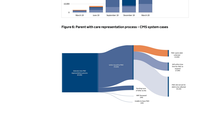
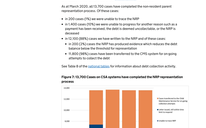


Figure 6: Table 10.2(b) parents who started the PWC representation process on the CMS computer system asked for an attempt to be made to collect the debt owed



5. Non-resident parent representation process

In cases where the PWC responds asking for the debt to be collected, the CSA, or CMS if the case has been moved onto the CMS IT system, performs a check of the records to establish whether there is realistic chance of collection. If there is, they write to the non-resident parent (NRP) to see if they want to make payment. If there is no chance, the case is transferred to the CMS system for ongoing attempts to collect the debt owed, or the case is deemed as having little chance of successful collection the debt will be written off.

These statistics do not currently include cases which were closed on the CMS system before December 2018, and will therefore progress through NRP representation on the CMS system. Cases closed on the CMS system before December 2018 do not have the data needed to report on their requests more quality assurance. We will continue work to develop these additional statistics and will aim to include them in the June 2020 release which is due to be published in October 2020.

Non-resident parent representation process on CSA systems

All cases held on CSA systems and eligible for representation had completed the non-resident parent representation process by the end of March 2020.

See Tables 11.1.2, 11.2 and 11.3 of the national tables for full data.

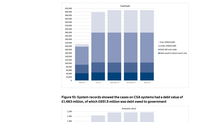
As of March 2020, all 33,700 cases have completed the non-resident parent representation process. 27 thousand cases:

- in 200 cases (1%) we were unable to trace the NRP
- in 2,700 cases (10%) we were unable to progress because the NRP's deceased
- in 24,300 cases (90%) we were able to demand consultation fee, as the NRP's deceased
- 1,000 (4%) cases we have written to the NRP and of these cases:
  - in 200 (1%) cases the NRP has provided evidence which reduces the debt owed to below the threshold for representation
  - in 800 (3%) cases have been transferred to the CMS system for ongoing attempts to collect the debt

See Table 8 of the national tables for information about debt collection activity.

Figure 7: 70,700 Cases on CSA systems have completed the NRP representation process

Figure 8: Non-resident parent representation process – Closing position for CSA system cases



Non-resident parent representation process on CMS systems

In exchange to the published strategy these statistics do not currently include non-resident parent representation for CSA cases which have been transferred to the CMS computer system because activity on these cases started after than on the CSA system and have not completed the non-resident parent representation process. Cases that were on the CSA computer system have progressed through the process on the CMS.

We will continue work to develop these additional statistics and will aim to include them in the June 2020 release, which is due to be published in October 2020.

6. CSA debt written off

The CSA Support Team has written off historical debt on 306,100 cases. 450,400 cases were held on CSA systems and 145,700 cases were held on CMS systems. These cases were closed on the CSA systems and 67,000 cases were closed on the CMS systems. 67,000 cases were closed on CSA systems and 2,900 million from cases held on CMS systems.

CSA debt written off on CSA systems

As of March 2020, there were 450,400 Child Support Agency cases held on CSA systems which have had their historical arrears adjusted or written off since the start of the compliance and arrears programme activity on 1 November 2018. These cases system records showing a total debt value of £1,463 million, of which £685.5 million was debt owed to government.

- 56,300 (12%) cases had system records showing debt which was owed to government only with a total value of £685.5 million
- 58,300 (14%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents of £55 or less (rounded to the nearest £5)
- 174,400 (41%) 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 £37.7 million
- 161,300 (37%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents of £500/£1,000 or more (depending on the start date of the case) with a total value of £739.8 million
- 4,100 (1%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents which was written off because the parent with care told us they do not want the debt collected or because the debt has been uncollectable. The debt has been adjusted due to representations or because the parent has been made aware the debt has been deemed uncollectable.

Some cases which are eligible for representation have not yet completed the process (read more detail about PWC representation), see Table 5.1 and 5.2 of the national tables for full data.

Figure 9: 306,100 cases on CSA systems have had their historical debt adjusted or written off between 1 November 2018 and 31 March 2020

Figure 10: System records showed the cases on CSA systems had a debt value of £1,463 million, of which £685.5 million was debt owed to government

CSA debt written off on CMS systems

As of March 2020, there were 145,700 Child Support Agency cases held on CMS systems which have had their historical arrears adjusted or written off since the start of the compliance and arrears programme activity on 1 November 2018. These cases system records showing a total debt value of £2,445 million, of which £1,275 million was debt owed to government.

- 28,200 (19%) cases had system records showing debt owed to government only with a total value of £1,275 million
- 28,100 (19%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents of £500 or less (rounded to the nearest £5)
- 28,100 (19%) 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 £9.5 million
- 44,500 (31%) cases had system records showing debt owed to parents which was written because the parent with care told us they do not want the debt collected or because the debt has been uncollectable. The debt has been adjusted due to representations or because the parent has been made aware the debt has been deemed uncollectable.

Some cases which are eligible for representation have not yet completed the process (read more detail about PWC representation), see Table 5.1 and 5.2 of the national tables for full data.

Figure 11: 145,700 cases on CMS systems have had their historical debt adjusted or written off between 1 November 2018 and 31 March 2020

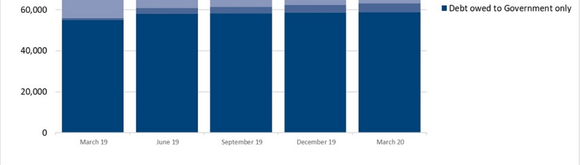


Figure 12: System records showed the cases on CMS systems had a debt value of £367.2 million, of which £200.7 million was debt owed to government

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 13 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 in 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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