



DEBATE PACK

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Statistics: Performance of child maintenance service in recovering payments from absent parents

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1. Statistics

1.1 Caseload

By the end of June 2019 there were **488,300 child maintenance arrangements** set up in the 2012 CMS scheme, and **458,100 paying parents** (a parent may be liable to pay to more than one arrangement).

Of these arrangements, **171,700 (35%)** were Collect-and-Pay arrangements, whereby the CMS itself manages and enforces collection of the money (as opposed to the Direct Pay arrangement, which is managed by the parents themselves).¹

Intake into the 2012 CMS averaged 23,500 cases per quarter in the year to June 2019, with 21,900 successful applications in the most recent quarter (April-June 2019).²

1.2 Compliance

In the second quarter of 2019, there were 139,300 parents who were liable to pay some child maintenance through the CMS collect-and-pay service. Of these, **67% were compliant** with their liability (i.e. they were due to pay money in that quarter and did so). This means that **33% of paying parents in the collect-and-pay service built up arrears in that quarter** due to non-compliance. Of the £60.3 million due to be paid through Collect-and-Pay in that quarter, £41.8 million (69%) was paid.³

This is unlikely to be a comprehensive count of all paying parents who have some arrears, as some parents who were technically compliant with their liability arising in Q2 2019 may still have unpaid arrears from previous quarters.

1.3 Enforcement

The most common enforcement action against non-compliant paying parents is a **deduction from earnings order**. In the second quarter of 2019, there were 48,300 deduction from earnings orders/requests in place in respect of paying parents in the Collect-and-Pay service. In 39,000 of these cases (81%) the paying parent was compliant, and £26.1 million was collected as a result.⁴

Where a parent is non-compliant with a deduction from earnings order, the CMS **Financial Investigation Unit** can investigate. Between April 2017 and June 2019, a total of 1,435 investigations were completed. In almost all cases the investigation resulted in an outcome of compliance with the deduction from earnings order, or a decision that a deduction from earnings order was no longer appropriate.⁵

¹ [DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 4](#)

² [DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 3](#)

³ [DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics tables 7 and 8](#)

⁴ [DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 11](#)

⁵ [DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 12](#)

Enforcement can also be sought through a **deduction order**, whereby the CMS can take unpaid child maintenance directly from a paying parent's bank account, either regularly or as a lump sum. They do not need to apply to the courts to do this. In the second quarter of 2019 the CMS set up 1,500 regular deduction orders and 700 lump-sum deduction orders. A total of £2.9 million was collected through deduction orders in the quarter.

In addition to the above, the CMS can pursue **civil enforcement actions** through the courts, comprising liability orders, enforcement agency referrals and, in the last resort, punitive sanctions such as imprisonment or disqualification from driving or holding a passport. A total of £2.3 million was collected through civil enforcement actions in the second quarter of 2019.⁶

1.4 Appeals

A parent can appeal a child maintenance decision about payment amounts. Before the appeal reaches the Tribunal Service, the CMS looks at the contested decision again ('mandatory reconsideration'). Only if the CMS stands by its original decision does the case go to the Tribunal.

Between April 2015 and June 2019, a total of 7,145 appeals were cleared (completed). In 1,875 cases (26%) the CMS revised its original decision, and in 1,625 cases (23%) the Tribunal service overturned the CMS decision in favour of the appellant parent.⁷

1.5 Arrears

As of the end of June 2019, cumulative arrears in the 2012 CMS scheme were **£293.6 million**. This equates to **11%** of the total child maintenance liability in the 2012 CMS scheme that should have been paid by that date.

The table below shows the build-up of arrears in the CMS since 2015.

⁶ [DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 11](#)

⁷ [DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 16](#)

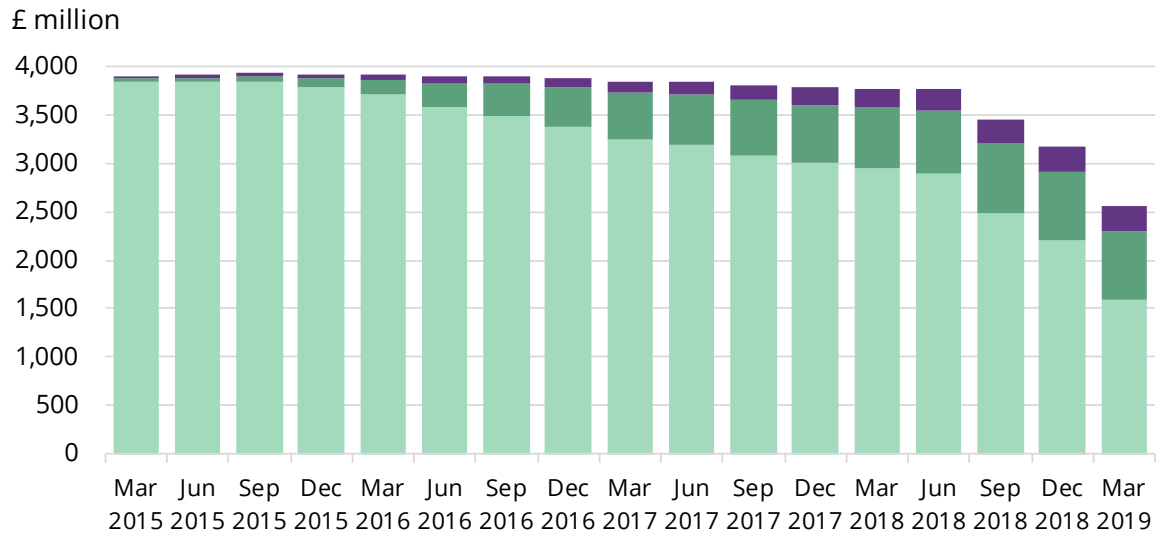
Child maintenance arranged in the 2012 CMS scheme					
Cumulative by the end of:	Child Maintenance that should have been paid			Unpaid and now needing to be collected through Collect and Pay	
	Total due	Of which: collection arrangement		£m	% of total due
		Direct pay	Collect and Pay		
	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Mar 2015	152.1	92.3	59.8	25.9	17%
Jun 2015	202.7	130.2	72.5	30.7	15%
Sep 2015	264.2	175.5	88.7	38.1	14%
Dec 2015	335.2	228.0	107.2	46.4	14%
Mar 2016	418.6	290.7	127.9	55.8	13%
Jun 2016	519.5	366.5	153.0	67.9	13%
Sep 2016	635.0	453.1	181.9	82.3	13%
Dec 2016	764.3	550.9	213.4	97.6	13%
Mar 2017	907.8	659.6	248.2	113.7	13%
Jun 2017	1,071.7	784.1	287.6	133.0	12%
Sep 2017	1,250.9	919.0	331.9	154.2	12%
Dec 2017	1,440.2	1,059.0	381.2	177.1	12%
Mar 2018	1,637.6	1,203.6	434.0	197.8	12%
Jun 2018	1,853.5	1,361.4	492.1	219.0	12%
Sep 2018	2,081.7	1,527.8	553.9	240.8	12%
Dec 2018	2,313.8	1,698.1	615.7	259.2	11%
Mar 2019	2,544.6	1,867.3	677.3	275.3	11%
Jun 2019	2,788.3	2,047.0	741.3	293.6	11%

Source

[DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 9](#)

As of March 2019, arrears built up within the 2012 CMS account for nearly 11% of the total outstanding child maintenance/child support arrears built up within the various statutory schemes – namely the 1993 and 2003 Child Support Agency (CSA) schemes and the 2012 CMS. By the end of 2018 the DWP had closed the last remaining CSA cases and begun a programme of large-scale write-offs of unrecoverable CSA debt, hence the large fall in outstanding historic CSA arrears in recent months (see table and chart below).

Cumulative outstanding child maintenance arrears in statutory schemes, GB



Source DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 9; Child Support Agency quarterly statistics tables 2 and 4

- CMS arrears to be collected through Collect and Pay
- CSA outstanding arrears transferred to the CMS
- CSA outstanding arrears still on CSA systems

Cumulative outstanding child maintenance arrears in statutory schemes					£ million
Great Britain					
Arrears built up under...	Child Maintenance Service (2012-)	Child Support Agency (1993 and 2003 schemes)		Total	
	CMS arrears to be collected through Collect and Pay	CSA outstanding arrears transferred to the CMS	CSA outstanding arrears still on CSA systems		
Cumulative as of month:					
Mar 2015	26	29	3,850	3,905	
Jun 2015	31	41	3,845	3,916	
Sep 2015	38	57	3,836	3,931	
Dec 2015	46	93	3,788	3,927	
Mar 2016	56	153	3,718	3,927	
Jun 2016	68	233	3,592	3,893	
Sep 2016	82	339	3,484	3,905	
Dec 2016	98	416	3,375	3,889	
Mar 2017	114	480	3,249	3,842	
Jun 2017	133	527	3,185	3,845	
Sep 2017	154	577	3,076	3,807	
Dec 2017	177	603	3,004	3,785	
Mar 2018	198	633	2,942	3,773	
Jun 2018	219	663	2,891	3,773	
Sep 2018	241	719	2,487	3,447	
Dec 2018	259	707	2,200	3,166	
Mar 2019	275	698	1,596	2,569	

Note

CSA arrears include money owed to the Secretary of State as well as to parents with care.

All CSA cases were closed by December 2018. A programme of large-scale write-offs of historic CSA arrears commenced from that date.

Sources

[DWP Child Maintenance Service quarterly statistics table 9](#)

[DWP Child Support Agency quarterly statistics tables 2 and 4](#)

1.6 Local CMS statistics

The DWP publishes CMS statistics at regional and local authority level in its quarterly CMS statistical bulletin, [available via this link](#). The regional tables show for each area:

- the number of CMS arrangements in each area (based on the location of the paying parent) and the number of children covered by these;
- a breakdown of arrangements by whether they are on Direct Pay or Collect and Pay and, in the case of Collect and Pay, whether or not the paying parent has paid money in the latest quarter.

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