

Child Maintenance Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help parents make informed choices about child maintenance.

The following release is produced every three months and is based on surveys with clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2016.

Main Stories

1 in 4 Child Maintenance Options clients have family-based arrangements after contact with Child Maintenance Options, May to July 2016.

26%

15,900 children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements after contact with Child Maintenance Options, May to July 2016.

15,900

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What you need to know

Child maintenance is financial support between separated parents to help with the everyday costs of looking after children.

If they agree, separated parents can arrange child maintenance themselves. This is called a 'family-based arrangement'. A family-based arrangement is a private way to sort out child maintenance. Parents arrange everything themselves and no-one else has to be involved.

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS), which replaces the Child Support Agency (CSA), is for when the parents can't agree to a family-based arrangement. Parents wishing to use the Child Maintenance Service must first speak to Child Maintenance Options (Options). Child maintenance can also be arranged through the court system.

Child Maintenance Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements.

Family-based arrangements, Effectiveness and Children Benefiting

Effective Family-based arrangements are set up by parents themselves and can be:

- a. Regular payments where at least some of the agreed amount is always/usually received on time.
- b. Occasional financial payments or transactions in kind (e.g. school uniform).

Where the surveyed parent thinks the arrangement is working well or fairly well.

Child maintenance arrangements set up after contact with Child Maintenance Options are arrangements that were set up or changed significantly after contact with Child Maintenance Options.

Other child maintenance arrangements are arrangements made prior to contact with Child Maintenance Options that have not changed since contact with Options.

Children Benefiting is the number of children covered by an effective child maintenance arrangement.

For more details see the Background information document:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics-background-information-and-methodology>

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Feedback is welcome

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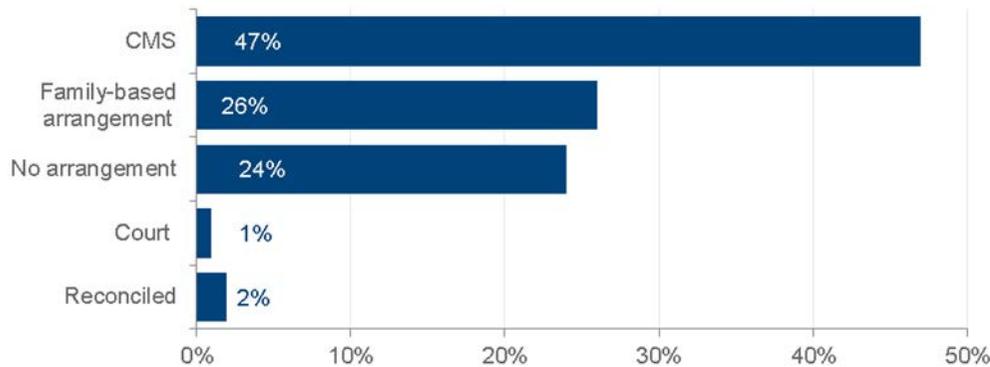
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Child Maintenance Arrangements

Out of the 73,600 clients that had contact with Child Maintenance Options between May and July 2016, 54,100 made a child maintenance arrangement.

A quarter of Child Maintenance Options clients have a family-based arrangement...

Arrangements made by Child Maintenance Options clients, May to July 2016



26% of Child Maintenance Options clients had family-based arrangements between May and July 2016.

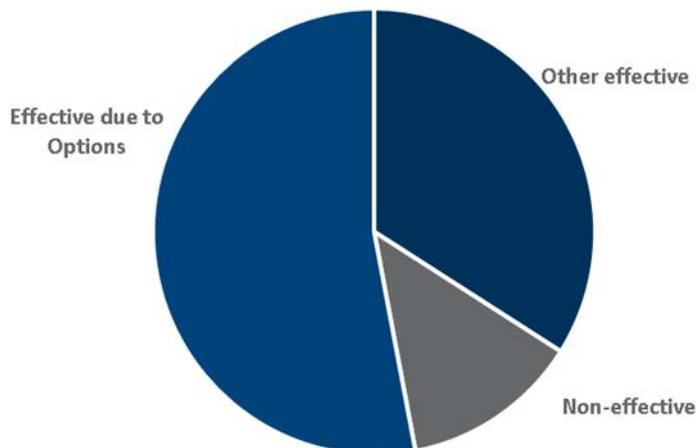
Nearly half (47%) of arrangements set up were with the Child Maintenance Service.

26% of clients had not agreed a child maintenance arrangement after contacting Options, including 2% who had reconciled.

See **Table 1** for full summary statistics.

...Of which 87% are effective

Family-based arrangements, May to July 2016



Of the 19,200 family-based arrangements, 16,600 were classified as effective. This is 87% of the total.

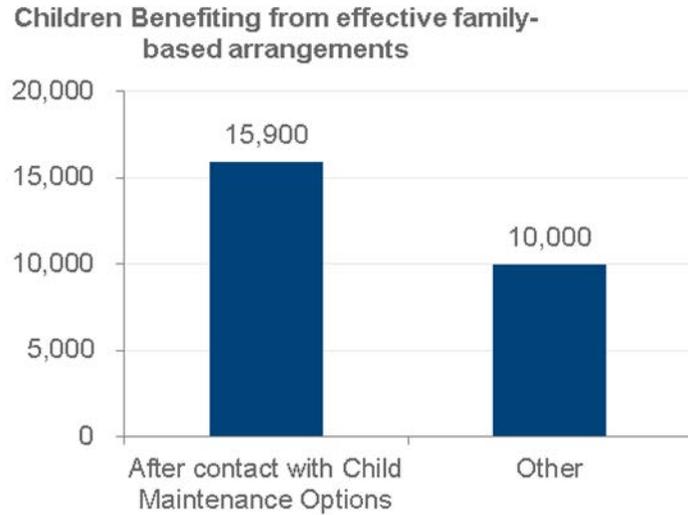
10,200 of these effective family-based arrangements were formed or changed after contact with Options. The remaining 6,400 are classed as “Other effective family-based arrangements”.

See **Table 2** for full data.

Children Benefiting

15,900 new children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements after contact with Child Maintenance Options

Children benefiting from effective family-based arrangements, May to July 2016



25,900 children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements. 15,900 of these were formed or changed after contact with Options. 10,000 children are benefiting from other effective family-based arrangements.

Overall figures for each month and arrangement type can be found in **Table 3** and **Table 4**.

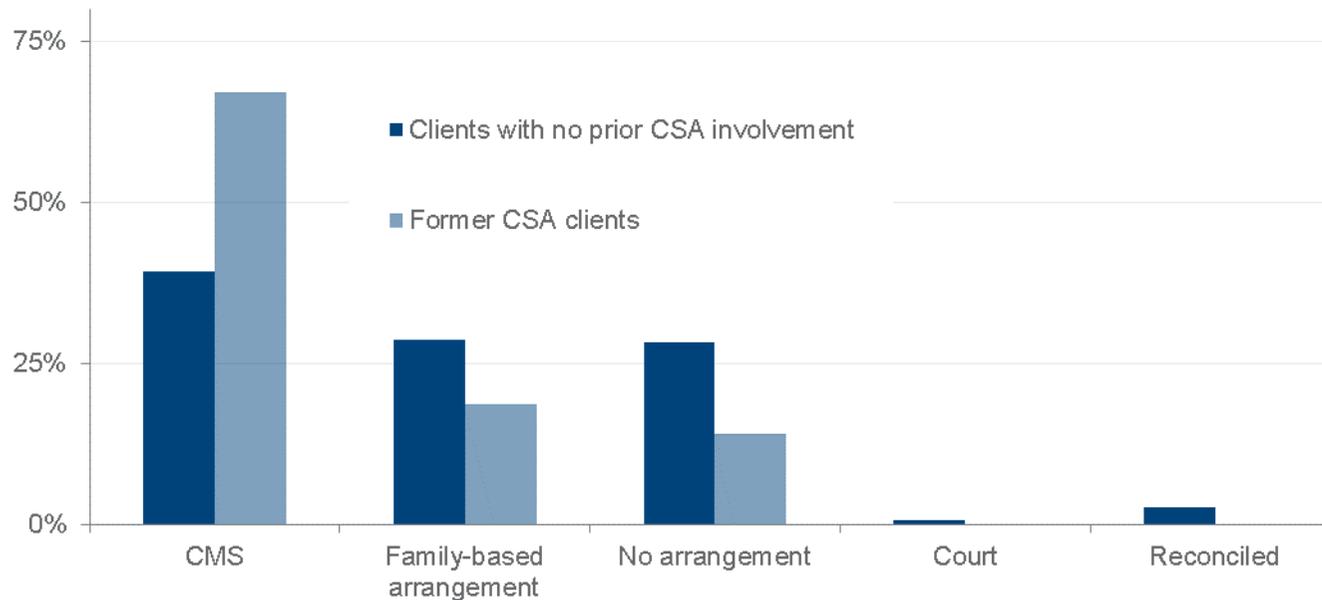
Clients with prior Child Support Agency involvement

The CSA only handles existing child maintenance cases. New applications are dealt with by the Child Maintenance Service. Child maintenance arrangements made through the CSA will be ending in 2017. These clients have been contacted and encouraged to contact Child Maintenance Options for support in agreeing a new child maintenance arrangement.

67% of former CSA clients opted for a child maintenance arrangement with the CMS

Arrangements made by Child Maintenance Options clients by client type, May to July 2016

Child Maintenance Arrangements



67% of former CSA clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options created a new child maintenance arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service. This is much higher than the proportion of clients who do not have historic involvement with the CSA.

The remaining CSA clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options made a Family-based arrangement or did not set up a child maintenance arrangement. Only 14% of former CSA clients did not set up an arrangement, compared with 28% of other clients.

See **Table 5** for full data.

About these statistics

The data is produced through quarterly surveys designed by DWP and conducted by Child Maintenance Options.

The population is composed of separated parents who have had a full telephone conversation with Child Maintenance Options.

The results are weighted up to the population of telephony clients who had a full conversation with Options to ensure the results are representative.

Certain types of clients are excluded from the sampling frame for practical purposes, including non-English speakers and clients who opt out of being contacted for research purposes.

These statistics have been developed using guidelines set out by the UK Statistics Authority.

Where to find out more

This document and the summary tables can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/effective-family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-preliminary-estimates-september-2016>

Older releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics>

How we plan to evaluate child maintenance reform: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-maintenance-reforms-how-we-will-evaluate-them>

The Child Maintenance Options website has further information on their work: <http://www.cmoptions.org/>