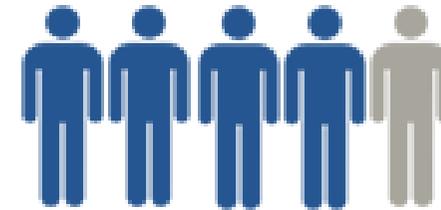


Child Maintenance Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help parents make informed choices about child maintenance.

The following publication gives estimates of the child maintenance outcomes of clients who called Child Maintenance Options in February to April 2017. The results are based on a telephone survey among Options clients which took place in June 2017.

Main Stories

27%



Around a quarter of clients had a family-based arrangement

Over four out of five family-based arrangements were effective

At a glance

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27% of arrangements were family-based arrangements

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Most family-based arrangements were effective

5

14,900 children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements

6

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Feedback is welcome

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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**' and is a private way to sort out child maintenance. Parents arrange everything themselves and no-one else has to be involved. A family-based arrangement is a regular financial arrangement or an ad-hoc arrangement which includes a financial element or transaction in kind.

The Child Maintenance Service which replaces the Child Support Agency 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 Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements.

Child maintenance can also be arranged through the court system.

Effectiveness, Options and Children Benefiting

A child maintenance arrangement is **Effective** if the three criteria below are satisfied:

- a. The parent surveyed receives/pays some or all of the money they are supposed to receive/pay.
- b. The child maintenance is usually or always paid on time.
- c. The parent believes the arrangement is working fairly well or very well.

A non-financial arrangement is effective if the parent believes it is working fairly well or very well.

A child maintenance arrangement is considered to be **Working Well** if the parent believes the arrangement is working fairly well or very well.

Child maintenance arrangements after Options are arrangements that were set up or changed 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:

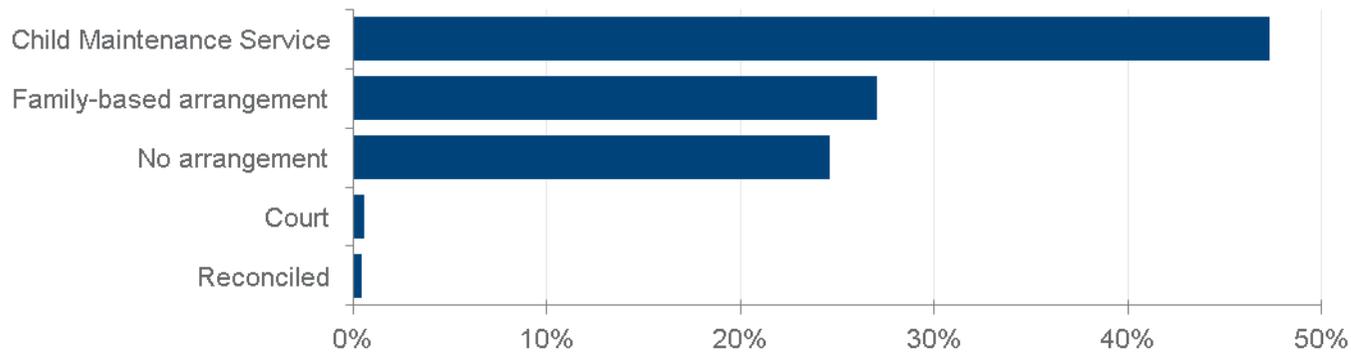
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics-background-information-and-methodology>

Child Maintenance Arrangements

Out of the 62,900 clients that had contact with Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2017, 75% had a child maintenance arrangement at the time of surveying. That is 47,100 child maintenance arrangements.

Over a quarter of Child Maintenance Options clients had family-based arrangements

Types of child maintenance arrangements made by clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2017 and were surveyed in June 2017



27% of Child Maintenance Options clients had family-based arrangements. 15% secured these after contacting Child Maintenance Options.

47% of clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options now have an arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service.

25% of clients had not agreed a child maintenance arrangement after contacting Options.

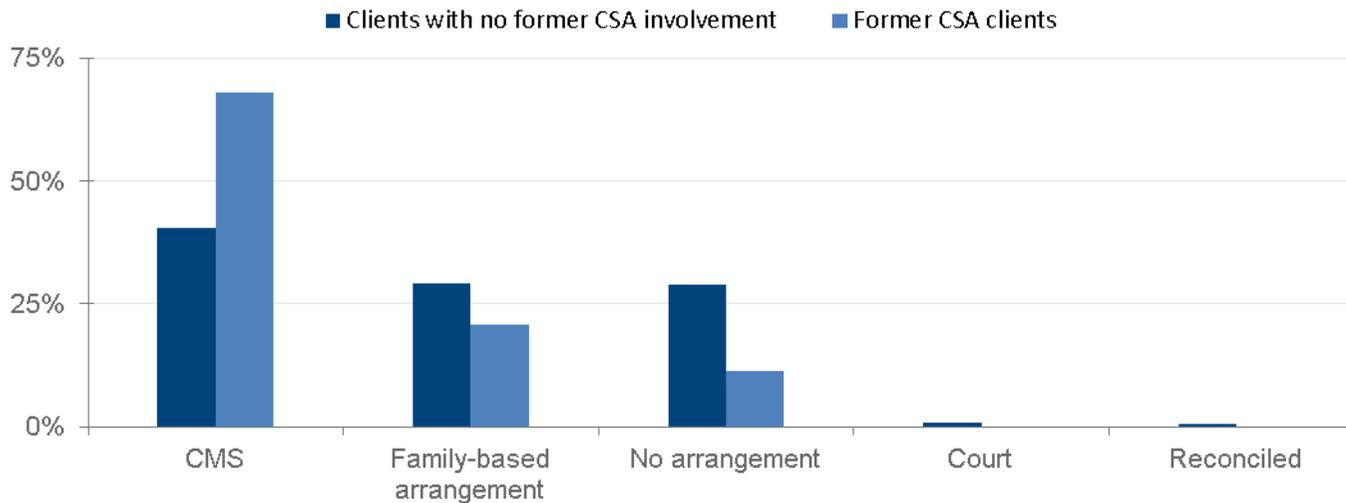
See **Table 1** for full data.

Clients with prior Child Support Agency (CSA) involvement

The Child Support Agency 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. The clients have been contacted and encouraged to contact Child Maintenance Options for support in agreeing a new child maintenance arrangement.

68% of former CSA clients who contacted Options decided to apply to the Child Maintenance Service

Child Maintenance Arrangements made by Child Maintenance Options clients between February and April 2017 by client history, surveyed in June 2017



68% of former CSA clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options created a new child maintenance arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service. This is a statistically significant difference from the 41% 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 11% of former CSA clients did not set up an arrangement, compared with 29% of other clients.

See **Table 2** for full data.

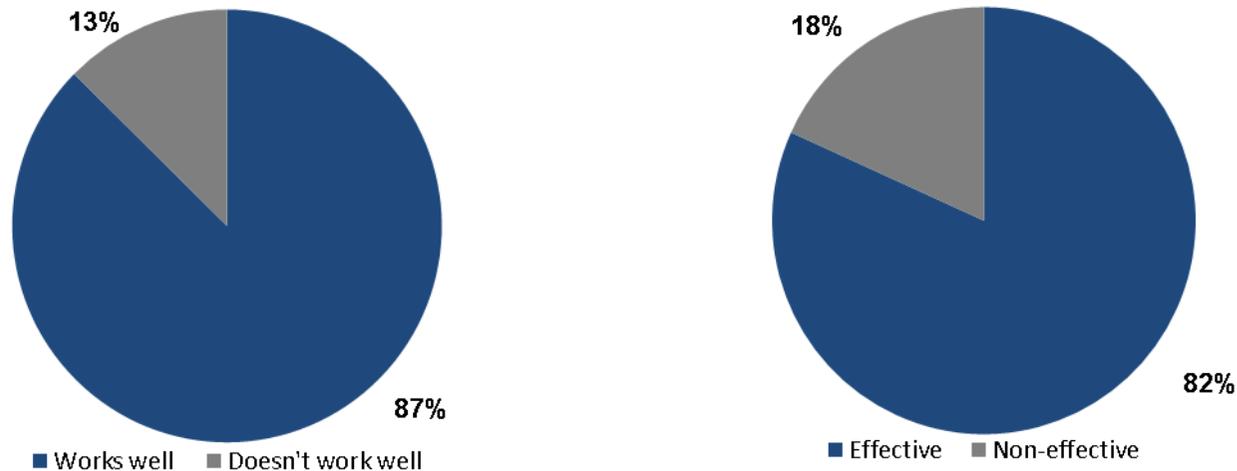
Arrangements that are effective or working well

Clients are asked three questions about their arrangements to establish whether the surveyed parent feels it is working well, whether at least some of the agreed amount is being paid and whether payments are on time.

A child maintenance arrangement is effective if at least some of the agreed amount is always/usually received on time and the surveyed parent thinks the arrangement is working very well or fairly well. Family-based arrangements which are set up between parents may not include a financial element. If the arrangement does not include a financial element, it is effective if the surveyed parent thinks the arrangement is working very well or fairly well.

Almost 9 out of 10 clients with a family-based arrangement thought it worked well

Percentage of Family-based arrangements that are effective or work well for clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2017, surveyed in June 2017



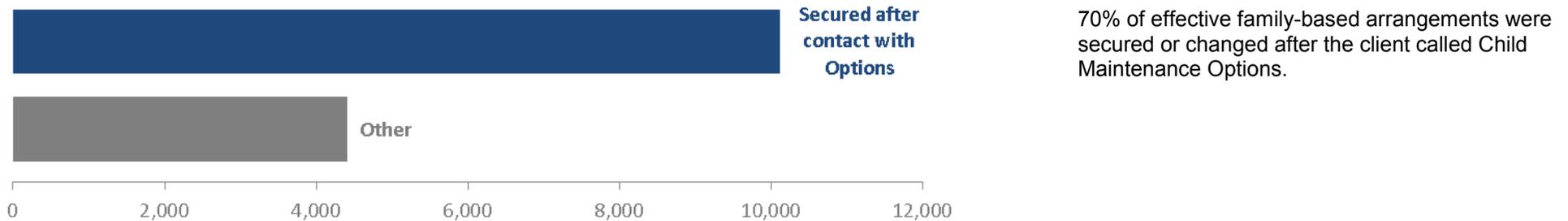
87% of parents said their family-based arrangement worked well. Of these, 94% also said some or most of the amount was being paid and that payments were always or usually on time. The arrangements of this group are classified as effective and represent 82% of all family-based arrangements.

See **Table 3 and 4** for full data.

The effect of Child Maintenance Options

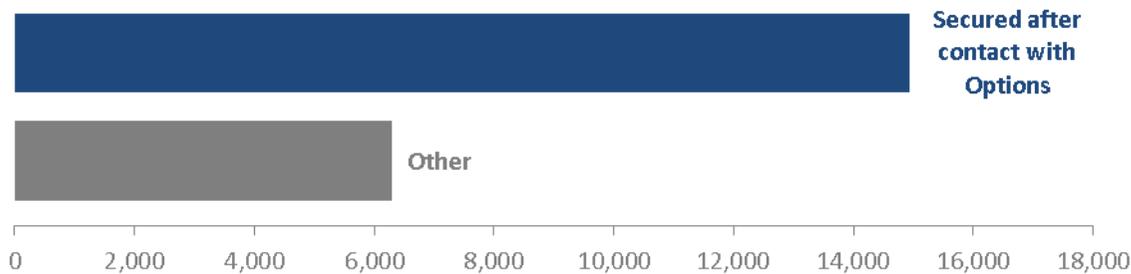
Not all family-based arrangements are secured after contact with Child Maintenance Options. Some are set up before the parent contacts Child Maintenance Options and some parents cannot recall if they set up or changed their arrangement before or after their call. These family based arrangements are classified as other family-based arrangements.

Effective family-based arrangements made by clients that contacted Child Maintenance Options between February to April 2017, surveyed in June 2017



14,900 children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements after contact with Options

Children benefiting from effective family-based arrangements made by clients that contacted Child Maintenance Options between February to April 2017, surveyed in June 2017



See **Table 5** for full data.

About these statistics

The data is produced through quarterly and annual longitudinal surveys conducted by Child Maintenance Options on behalf of the DWP.

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

In the quarterly surveys, the results are weighted up to the population of telephony customers who had a full conversation with Child Maintenance Options to ensure the results are representative. For the annual survey, the results are then weighted to be representative of the different outcomes that clients had in the quarterly surveys.

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

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

Changes to the publication

The Department continues to make improvements to the way these statistics are reported. The next publication is expected to include more detailed information on the compliance rates of all types of child maintenance arrangements.

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-data-to-march-2017>

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/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387584/child-maintenance-reforms-evaluation-strategy.pdf

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