

Uses and users of the Child Support Agency Quarterly Summary of Statistics

Introduction

The Child Support Agency (CSA) Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS) is a National Statistics product which is produced by the Department for Work and Pensions, and contains the most up-to-date tables and breakdowns on the CSA's 1993 and 2003 statutory child maintenance schemes, including those cases being managed off the main IT systems.

The CSA QSS is published quarterly (March, June, September and December) alongside a DWP First Release, with regional figures being produced six monthly (alongside December and June publications).

Consultation

The CSA conducted a consultation relating to the QSS in the summer of 2009. In order to aid consideration of how data could be better presented and made more appropriate and meaningful the consultation exercise centred on a proposal for a revised QSS. The proposal made greater use of graphs and key facts in addition to tables and also presented data on a quarterly rather than monthly basis. Tables that were potentially not meaningful were removed and the presentation focused on the cycle of statutory child maintenance activity from application through to enforcement. Particular focus of the consultation was:

- Is the revised QSS easier to use and better focused?
- Is the revised format and presentation helpful and accessible?
- What frequency of publication would be most meaningful and appropriate?

Feedback on the proposed QSS was very positive and full details can be found on the [National Archive](#).

Known uses of CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics

The CSA QSS (and underlying datasets) are used by a number of internal stakeholders for:

- Monitoring and reporting performance trends against key indicators
- Informing briefing, lines to take and press releases
- Internal communications
- Answering Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests
- Undertaking internal analysis and producing figures at a lower and more granular level
- Setting internal performance measures
- Policy evaluation and to help external users gauge the effectiveness of Child Maintenance Systems

Our external, internet based, publication means that we cannot ascertain all the varied uses of the numbers produced. However, we do know that the CSA QSS is used for:

- Providing general information on the Child Support Agency in Great Britain
- Measuring performance against key indicators
- Providing a view broken down to a regional level on a quarterly basis
- Informing discussions and meetings with external stakeholders and MPs
- Social research and academic studies of the effectiveness of social policy

Valid uses of the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics

The CSA QSS can be used for:

- Reviewing and monitoring performance against key areas including the number of children benefiting from maintenance, total value of money collected and arranged and the number of cases where there has been a successful outcome
- Understanding the split of cases and performance across the two statutory child maintenance schemes
- Providing a full view of child maintenance activity from application to enforcement.

However, the numbers should not be used for:

- Statistics on the full breakdown of arrears. Full details are published in the [Client Funds Accounts](#).

Areas of unmet need and where future development is needed

Statistics giving the full benefit split. Currently this only includes Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance and Incapacity Benefit. The National Benefits Database needs refreshing to include the full range of DWP benefits.

How to comment and get involved

The Department for Work and Pensions is always glad to hear the comments and views of customers on the CSA QSS. A number of routes are already used to seek user views. For example:

- National Statistics consultations are run for large proposed changes. For example, in 2009 a consultation was held to review the presentation, format and frequency of the QSS
- Experimental tables have been used to present new information seeking and acting on user views to inform further publications
- Holding regular forums with external stakeholders where issues or queries regarding the QSS can be raised or discussed
- Monitoring the usage of the websites
- Monitoring ad hoc analysis requests

Main users of the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics

- The public
- External interest groups
- Parliament
- Department for Work and Pensions Ministers
- Ministers and officials in other Government departments
- Academics
- The media and external commentators
- Department for Work and Pensions policy and operational officials