

Child maintenance arrangements made after speaking to Child Maintenance Options

Data up to April 2018

Quarterly

Published: 31st October 2018
Great Britain

Experimental

Child Maintenance Options (Options) is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help parents make informed choices about child maintenance. 48,700 parents contacted Options between February and April 2018. The estimates in this publication are based on telephone interviews with 1,100 of those parents. We asked parents about their child maintenance arrangements and whether they were made after speaking to Options. We also asked parents if they thought their arrangements were working well.

Main Stories

33,400

Between February and April 2018, **Child Maintenance Options** helped parents set up 33,400 child maintenance arrangements.

8,300

Of these 8,300 were **family-based arrangements**.

85%

85% of parents with a family-based arrangement **said it worked fairly or very well**

At a glance

Page

78% of parents who contacted Options between February and April 2018 had an arrangement in June 2018

3

85% of parents with a family-based arrangement thought it worked fairly or very well

6

7,800 functioning family-based arrangements were created after contacting Options

7

Analyst: Emma Bowley

cm.analysis.research@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

DWP Press Office: 0203 267 5129

Feedback is welcome

Published 31st October 2018

Next edition in February 2019

© Crown copyright

What you need to know

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

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

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. Family-based arrangements can be regular financial payments or arrangements that may include a financial element or transactions in kind.

The Child Maintenance Service, which replaces the Child Support Agency (CSA), is for when 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) who can refer them to the Child Maintenance Service.

Read more information on the [performance of the Child Maintenance Service](#).

Child maintenance can also be arranged through the court system.

Types of arrangements and children on arrangements

Some child maintenance arrangements are **set up or changed after contacting Child Maintenance Options**. **Other** child maintenance arrangements are made before contact with Child Maintenance Options and do not change after contacting Options.

A family-based arrangement consisting of regular financial payments is counted as **functioning** if all or some of the agreed money is being paid. A family-based arrangement that contains non regular payments or payments in kind is considered to be **functioning** if the parent surveyed believes it is working fairly well or very well.

Children on arrangements means the number of children who a paying parent has a child maintenance arrangement for.

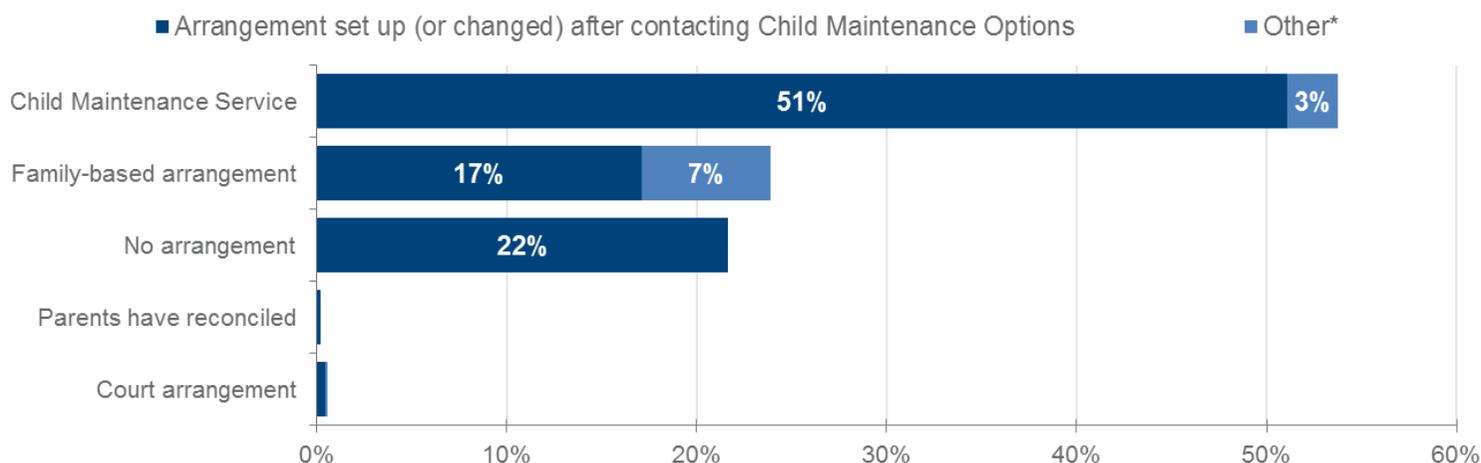
For more details see the [Background Information document](#).

Child Maintenance Arrangements

Out of the **48,700** parents that had contact with Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2018, we estimate **78%** had a child maintenance arrangement at the time of surveying. This is **38,100** Child Maintenance Service, court and family-based arrangements.

78% of parents who contacted Options between February and April 2018 had an arrangement in June 2018

Types of child maintenance arrangements made by parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2018 and were surveyed in June 2018



Almost a quarter (**24%**) of parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2018 had a family-based arrangement. **17%** set up or changed their family-based arrangement after contacting Options, while **7%** already had a family-based arrangement in place or could not remember if they set up or changed their arrangement after speaking to Options.

Not all parents with family-based arrangements will contact Child Maintenance Options so the true number of parents with family-based arrangements in society will be higher.

54% of parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2018 have an arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service.

22% of parents had not agreed a child maintenance arrangement after contacting Options.

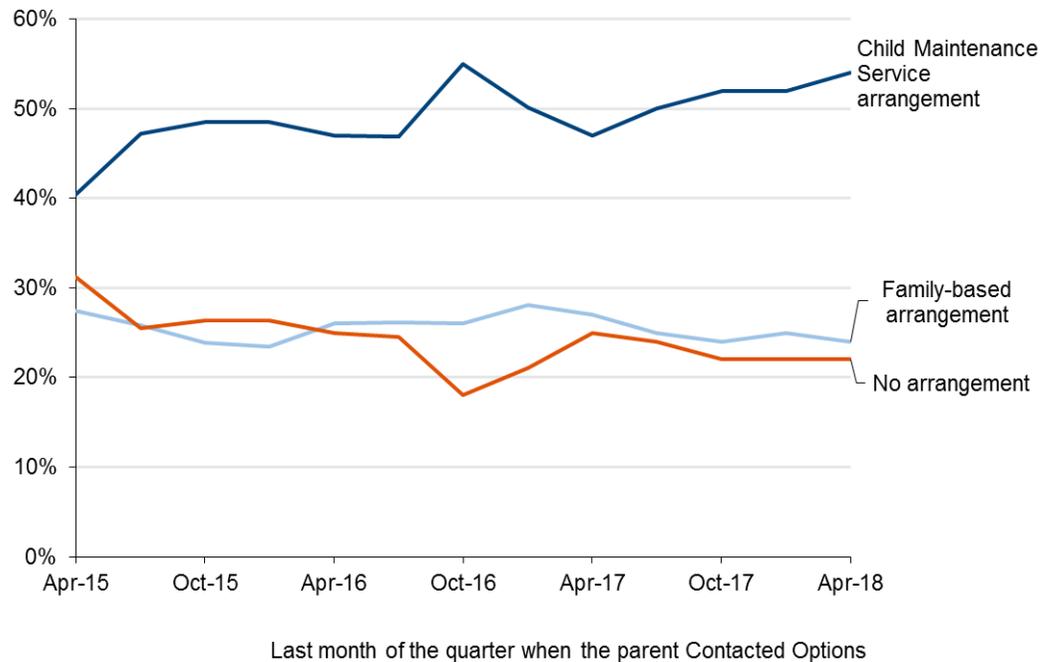
See **Table 1** for full data.

*'Other' includes arrangements set up before a parent's most recent contact with Child Maintenance Options. It also includes arrangements where the parent cannot remember whether they set up the arrangement before or after contact with Options.

Child Maintenance Arrangements

The percentage of parents choosing a Child Maintenance Service Arrangement has increased over time

Percentage of parents with no arrangement, Child Maintenance Service or family-based arrangements after contacting Options over time



40% of parents who contacted Options in the first quarter of 2015 reported having a Child Maintenance Service Arrangement. This has increased by fourteen percentage points to **54%** for parents who contacted Options in the first quarter of 2018.

- This is a statistically significant difference.¹

31% of parents who contacted Options in the first quarter of 2015 reported having no arrangement. This has decreased by nine percentage points to **22%** for parents who contacted Options in the first quarter of 2018.

- This is also a statistically significant difference.¹

24% of parents who contacted Options in the first quarter of 2018 had a family based arrangement, this has not changed significantly¹ from the first quarter of April 2015 when it was 27%

See **Table 2** for full data.

¹ (see **About these statistics** for details)

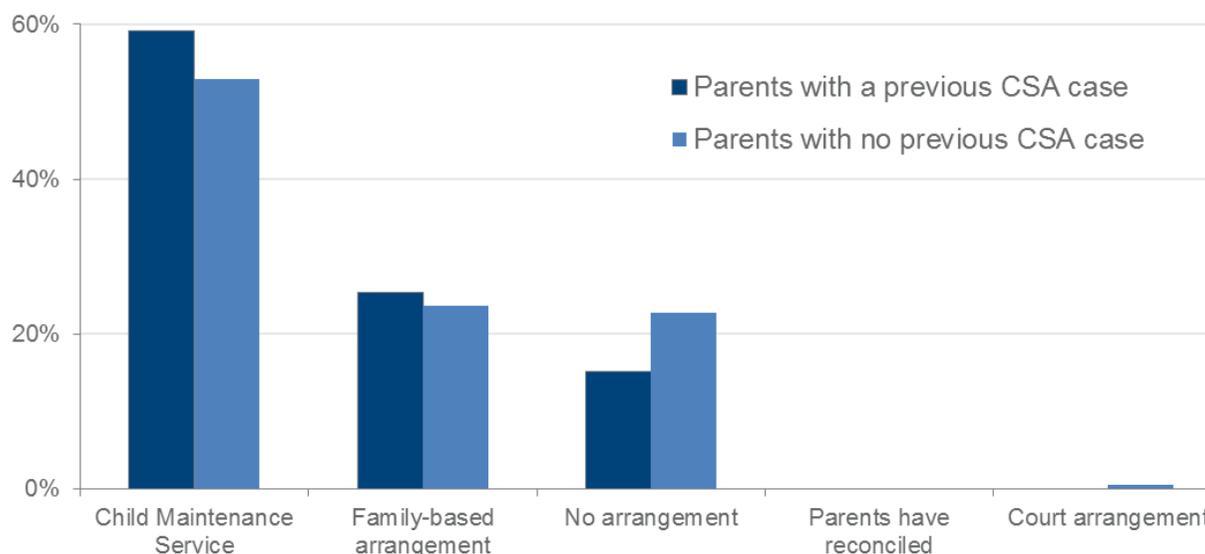
Parents with a previous Child Support Agency (CSA) case

Parents who are looking for help managing their child maintenance arrangements can make an application to the Child Maintenance Service. The Child Support Agency (CSA) only handles historic child maintenance cases and is currently being closed down. Parents with a CSA case have been encouraged to contact Child Maintenance Options for support in agreeing a new child maintenance arrangement.

Further information and statistics on the [performance and closure of the Child Support Agency](#).

59% of parents who had a CSA case and contacted Options decided to apply to the Child Maintenance Service

Child Maintenance Arrangements made by parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2018, surveyed in June 2018



59% of parents who we know had a case with the CSA set up a new child maintenance arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service following contact with Options.

- This is a **statistically significant difference** from the **53%** of parents who do not have previous involvement with the CSA.

The remaining parents with previous CSA cases who contacted Options said they made a Family-based arrangement or did not set up a child maintenance arrangement. **15%** of parents with a previous CSA case who contacted Options reported having no arrangement, compared with **23%** of parents without a previous CSA case.

- This is also a **statistically significant difference** (see **About these statistics** for details).

See **Table 3** for full data.

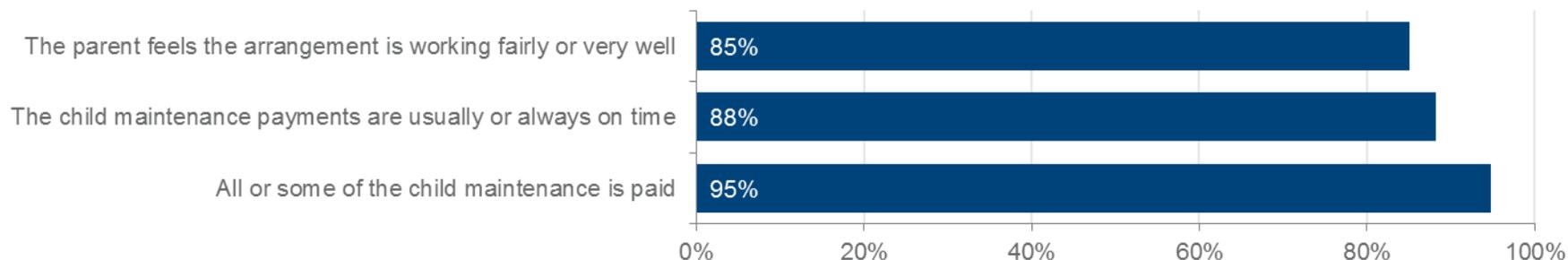
Parents with previous CSA cases are identified through calls to a dedicated Child Maintenance Options telephone number. Some parents with CSA cases may not use this number so the true number of parents who had CSA cases may be higher.

Family-based arrangements

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. Family-based arrangements can be regular financial payments or flexible arrangements which may include a financial element or transactions in kind. Parents in this survey are all asked whether they feel their family-based arrangements are working well. If the arrangement involves a financial element, parents are asked whether payments are being made in part or in full, and whether they are being paid on time.

85% of parents with a family-based arrangement thought it worked fairly or very well

Assessments of family-based arrangement by parents who contacted Options between February and April 2018, and were surveyed in June 2018



85% of parents said that their family-based arrangement was working very or fairly well.

Out of the parents whose family-based arrangements involved regular financial payments, 88% said their payments were on time and 95% said they received some or all of their payment.

87% of parents whose family-based arrangements involved regular financial payments said they paid or received some or all of their child maintenance and it was usually or always on time.

See **Table 4** for full data.

Children on family-based arrangements

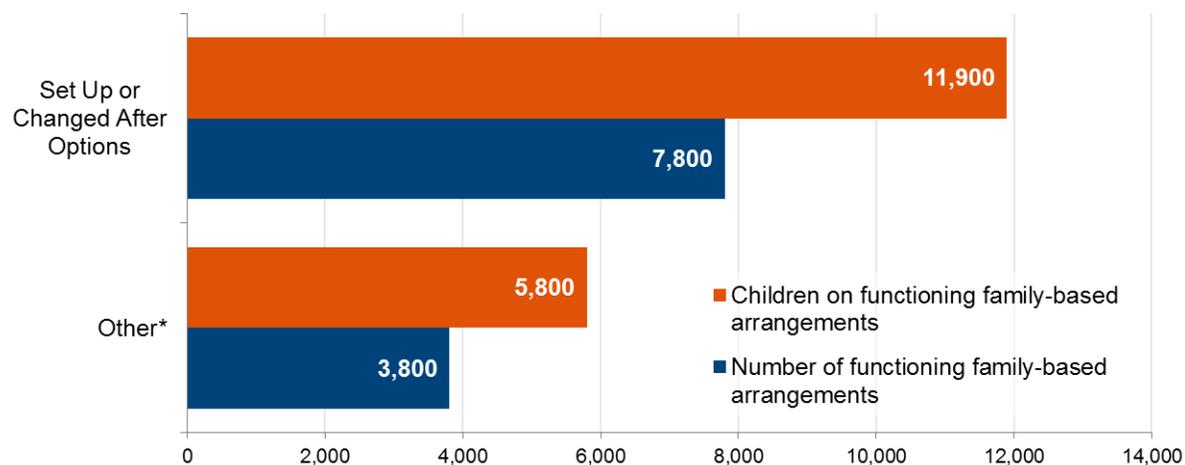
Options aims to support parents to set up arrangements that work for them. We ask parents about their arrangements to determine whether or not they are **functioning**.

A family-based arrangement consisting of regular financial payments is counted as **functioning** if all or some of the agreed money is being paid. A family-based arrangement that contains non regular payments or payments in kind is considered to be **functioning** if the parent surveyed believes it is working fairly well or very well.

For family-based arrangements consisting of regular financial payments, **children on functioning family-based arrangements** are children for whom a paying parent is contributing some or all of the due child maintenance. For family-based arrangements not consisting of regular payments it is the number of children on arrangements where the surveyed parent believes it is working fairly or very well.

7,800 functioning family-based arrangements were created after contacting Options

Functioning family-based arrangements and children benefiting for parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2018, surveyed in March 2018



7,800 functioning family-based arrangements were set up or changed by parents after contacting Child Maintenance Options between February and April 2018.

- **11,900** children are on these arrangements.

There were an additional **3,800** functioning family-based arrangements that had not been set up after contact with Options between February and April 2018. This could be because the arrangement was set up before the parent contacted Options or the parents could not remember if they set up their arrangement before or after they spoke to Options. These are classed as other family-based arrangements. **5,800** children were on these arrangements.

See **Table 5** for full data.

About these statistics

The data is produced through four quarterly surveys and one annual longitudinal survey conducted by Child Maintenance Options on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Of the parents who contacted Options between February and April 2018 a sample were contacted to see what child maintenance arrangements they had in place and how they thought the arrangements were working.

The population is all separated parents who have had a full telephone conversation about their child maintenance needs with Child Maintenance Options.

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

In the quarterly surveys, the results are weighted to be representative of the number of parents who had a full telephone conversation about their child maintenance needs with Child Maintenance Options in that quarter. For the annual longitudinal survey, the results are weighted to be representative of the child maintenance arrangements parents said they had in the quarterly surveys.

A result is **statistically significant** if it cannot be attributed to chance. This publication measures statistical significance at the 95% level which means you would only expected to see the result caused by chance 1 in 20 times.

These statistics have been developed using [guidelines set out by the UK Statistics Authority](#).

Changes to Publication

We have included historical proportions of Child Maintenance Service arrangements, family-based arrangements and families with no arrangements reported by parents to show the trends in the proportion of parents choosing these arrangements over time.

This will be the last publication to show the split of outcomes for customers with a previous Child Support Agency case. The Case Closure process to transfer active Child Support Agency cases to the Child Maintenance Service is nearing completion and there will be insufficient cases for comparison.

Where to find out more

Website for this [document and the summary tables](#).

[Older releases of these statistics](#).

How we plan to evaluate [child maintenance reform](#).

The [Child Maintenance Options website](#) has further information on their work.

[Information and statistics on the Child Maintenance Service](#).