

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 2016 to January 2017. The results are based on quarterly surveys and a longitudinal survey in which the respondents from the quarterly surveys are re-contacted.

## Main Stories

**17% of clients made or changed effective family-based arrangements**

after contacting Child Maintenance Options between February 2016 to January 2017

**75,200 children are benefiting from these family-based arrangements**

17%

75,200

## At a glance

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29% of arrangements were family-based arrangements

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269,600 children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements

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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'. 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). This 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.

## 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 and the surveyed parent thinks the arrangement is working very well or fairly well.
- b. Occasional financial payments or transactions in kind (e.g. school uniform) where the surveyed parent thinks the arrangement is working very well or fairly well.

**Child maintenance arrangements made or changed 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:

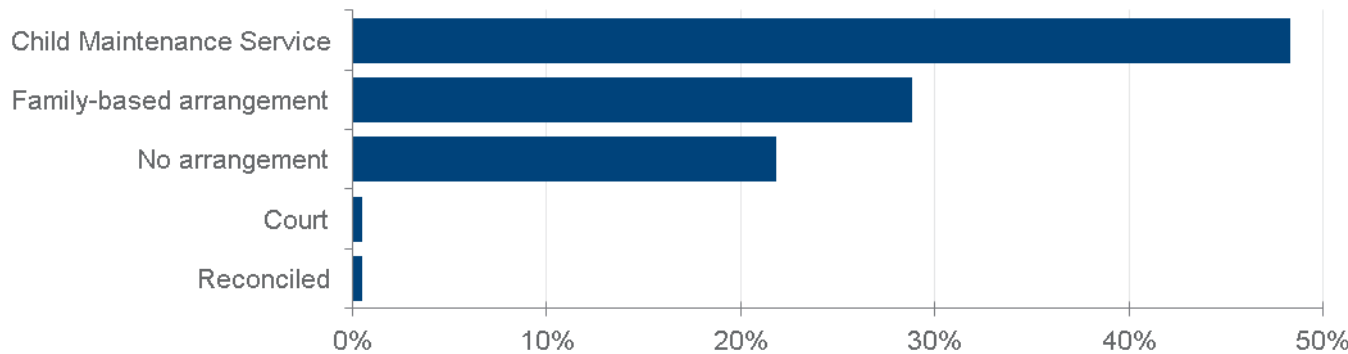
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics-background-information-and-methodology>

# Child Maintenance Arrangements in the past year

Out of the 291,700 clients that had contact with Child Maintenance Options between February 2016 and January 2017, over three quarters had a child maintenance arrangement at the time of surveying. That is 226,800 child maintenance arrangements.

## 29% of Child Maintenance Options clients in the last year had a family-based arrangement

Types of child maintenance arrangements made by clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February 2016-January 2017 and were surveyed in March 2017



The percentage of clients with a family-based arrangement has increased by 2% points from last year (February 2015 – January 2016).

Nearly half of arrangements were made with the Child Maintenance Service, similar to last year.

22% of clients did not have a child maintenance arrangement after contacting Child Maintenance Options.

See **Table 1** for full data.

## ...85% of which were effective

Effectiveness of child maintenance arrangements for clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options between February 2016-January 2017 and were surveyed in March 2017



71,600 family-based arrangements were effective. That is 85% of the total, compared to 77% in the previous year.

Only 34% of court arrangements were found to be effective. However, the sample size was very small.

See **Table 2** for full data.

# Family-based Arrangements

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

## Most family-based arrangements were effective and secured after contact with Child Maintenance Options

Family-based arrangements for clients that contacted Child Maintenance Options between February 2016-January 2017 and were surveyed in March 2017

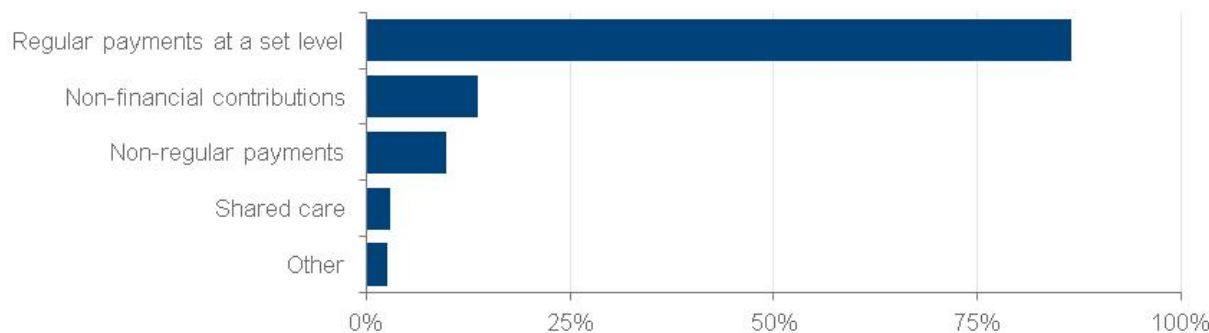


50,400 family-based arrangements were effective and secured after contact with Options. This represents 17% of all clients.

A further 21,200 are “other effective family-based arrangements”, representing 7% of the total client base.

## The majority of family-based arrangements consisted of regular payments at a set level to the receiving parent

Common forms of family-based arrangements for clients that contacted Child Maintenance Options between February 2016-January 2017 and were surveyed in March 2017



The majority of family-based arrangements consisted of regular payments at a set level. In 10% of cases, the arrangement involved non-regular payments such as school fees, holidays or pocket money.

For 14%, the paying parent made non-financial contributions such as buying clothes or contributing to child care costs.

Note that a family-based arrangement can involve more than one of these options at the same time.

See **Table 3** for full data.

# Children Benefiting

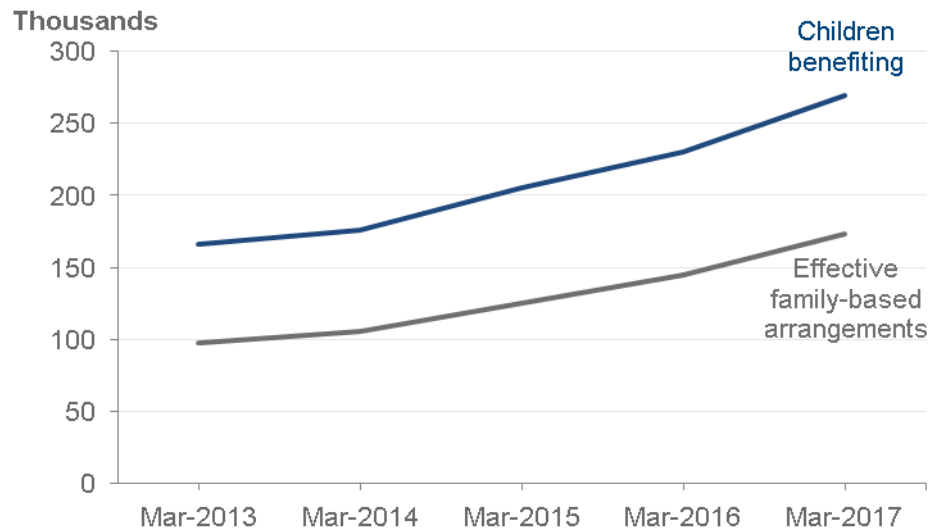
Parents were asked how many children are covered by their child maintenance arrangements. This is used to estimate the total number of children benefiting from effective child maintenance arrangements. The survey results are then combined with data from previous publications to estimate the number of children currently benefiting from family-based arrangements secured after contact with Options since the service began.

In March 2017, 173,600 effective family-based arrangements were in place that were made or changed following contact with Child Maintenance Options since 2008. 51,400<sup>a</sup> new effective arrangements were in place after contact with Options between February 2016 and January 2017. At the same time, some arrangements from earlier years ended or became non-effective, resulting in a net increase of 29,100 family-based arrangements.

**75,200 new children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements made or changed after contact with Options between February 2016 and January 2017.**

**269,600 children benefiting from effective family-based arrangements since Child Maintenance Options began**

**Total children benefiting from effective family-based arrangements made or changed after contact with Child Maintenance Options**



NB: These figures differ from previous publications due to a change in methodology.

See **Table 4** for full data.

a. For this figure, up to two effective family-based arrangements per client are counted, as opposed to only one per client for the figure on page 4.

## 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.

## 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](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/>