

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 August and October 2016.

## Main Stories

**16% of clients secured an effective family-based arrangement** after contacting Child Maintenance Options between August to October 2016

16%

**16,900 children are benefiting from effective family-based arrangements** made after contact with Child Maintenance Options between August to October 2016.

16,900

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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). 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 secured 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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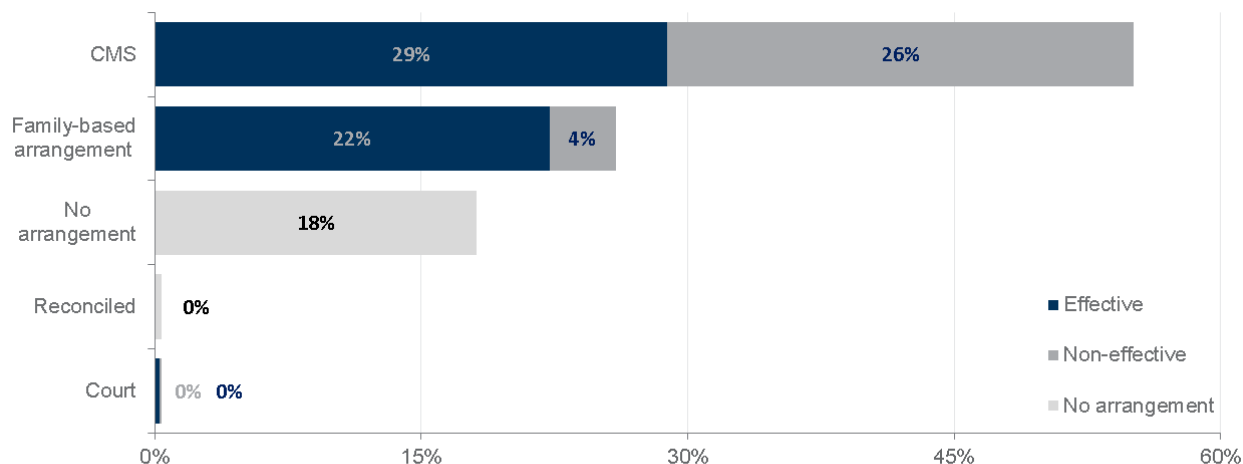
Next edition in July 2017

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# Child Maintenance Arrangements

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

Arrangements made by Child Maintenance Options clients, August to October 2016



26% of Child Maintenance Options clients had family-based arrangements. 19% secured these after contacting Child Maintenance Options, of which 16% were effective and 3% not effective.

Over half (55%) of clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options now have an arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service. In the previous quarter, this was 47%.

18% of clients had not agreed a child maintenance arrangement after contacting Options; lower than the 26% for the period May-July 2016, as shown in the September publication.

52% of CMS arrangements are effective. It may take more than the three months between a client's call to Options and the survey to finalise a CMS arrangement and make it work. For this reason, final figures are published in the annual publication.

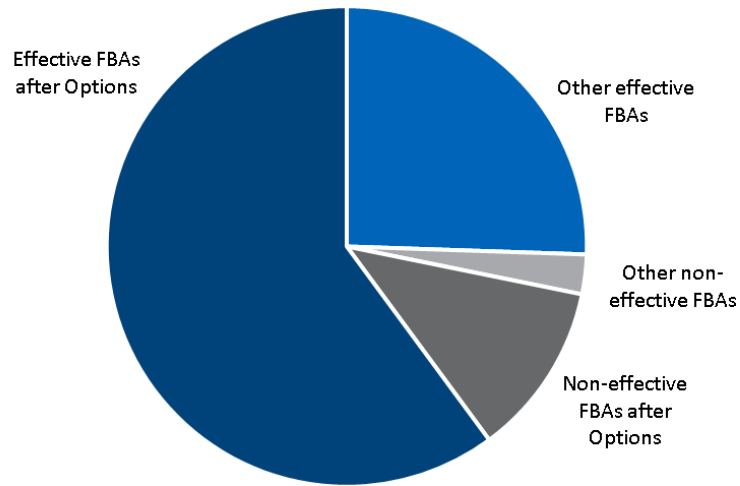
See **Table 1** for full summary statistics

# Family-based Arrangements

Some parents call Child Maintenance Options to ask for advice even if they already have a child maintenance arrangement in place. Therefore not all arrangements of Options clients can be attributed to Child Maintenance Options. Arrangements that were neither set up after calling Options nor changed since are classified as 'other arrangements'.

## 85% of family-based arrangements are effective

Family-based arrangements, August to October 2016



Of the 18,900 family-based arrangements, 16,100 were classified as effective. This is 85% of the total.

11,300 of these effective family-based arrangements were formed or changed after contact with Options, representing 60% of all family-based arrangements and 16% of all Options clients.

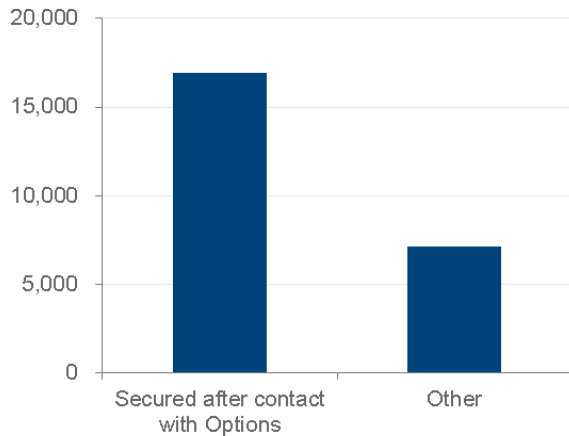
The remaining 4,800, or 25%, are classed as "Other effective family-based arrangements".

See **Table 2** for full data.

# Children Benefiting

## 16,900 children are benefiting from new or changed effective family-based arrangements after contact with Child Maintenance Options

Children benefiting from effective family-based arrangements, August to October 2016



There are 24,000 children benefiting from effective family-based arrangements whose parents called Child Maintenance Options in the period August-October 2016. For 16,900 children, these arrangements were made or changed after contact with Options. 7,100 children are benefiting from other effective family-based arrangements.

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

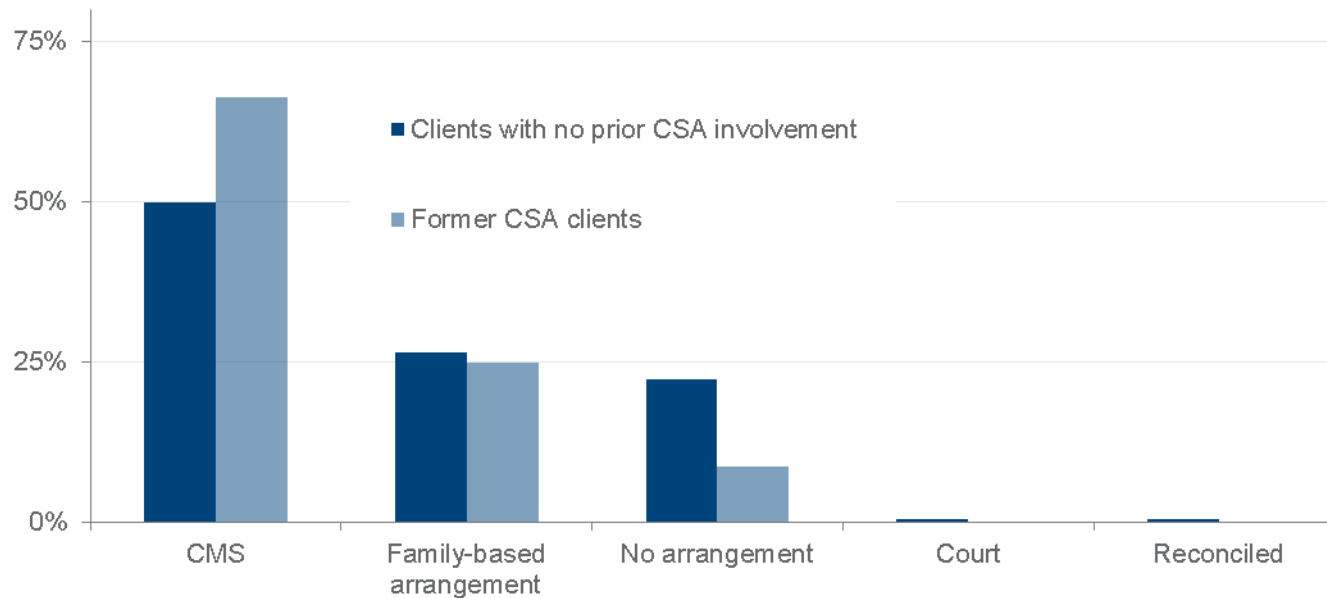
## Clients with prior Child Support Agency (CSA) involvement

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

### 66% of former CSA clients opted for a child maintenance arrangement with the CMS

Arrangements made by Child Maintenance Options clients by client type, August to October 2016

Child Maintenance Arrangements



66% 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 (50%).

The remaining CSA clients who contacted Child Maintenance Options made a Family-based arrangement or did not set up a child maintenance arrangement. Only 9% of former CSA clients did not set up an arrangement, compared with 22% of other clients.

See **Table 4** 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-december-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/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/>