

Child maintenance arrangements made after speaking to Child Maintenance Options

Data from customers calling up to October 2018, surveyed in March to April 2019

Quarterly

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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.

45,500 parents contacted Options between August and October 2018. The estimates in this publication are based on telephone interviews with 1,193 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

33,100

Between August and October 2018, **Child Maintenance Options** helped parents set up 33,100 child maintenance arrangements.

6,900

Of these 6,900 were **family-based arrangements**.

90%

90% of parents with a family-based arrangement **said it worked fairly or very well**

At a glance

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82% of parents who contacted Options between August and October 2018 had an arrangement when contacted in March/April 2019

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90% of parents with a family-based arrangement thought it worked fairly or very well

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6,700 functioning family-based arrangements were created after contacting Options

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Feedback is welcome

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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 cannot 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. A **Child Maintenance Service Arrangement** includes both Collect and Pay and Direct Pay arrangements.

For information on the performance of the Child Maintenance Service please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-the-2012-statutory-child-maintenance-scheme>

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 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.

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:

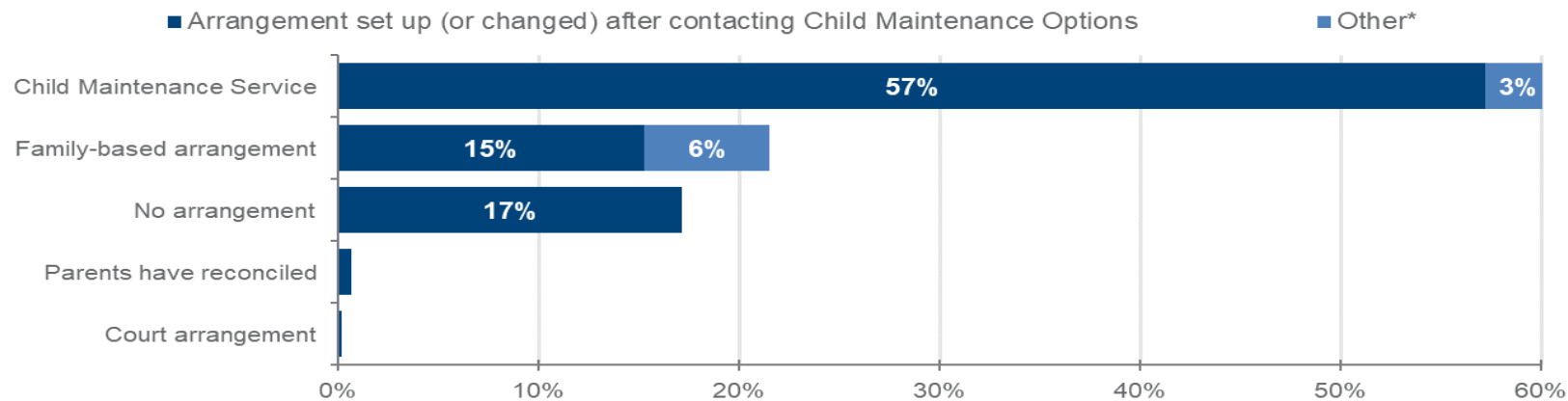
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/effective-family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics-background-information-and-methodology>

Child Maintenance Arrangements¹

Out of the **45,500** parents that had contact with Child Maintenance Options between August and October 2018, we estimate **82%** had a child maintenance arrangement when contacted. This is **37,400** Child Maintenance Service, court and family-based arrangements.

82% of parents who contacted Options between August and October 2018 had an arrangement in March/April 2019

Types of child maintenance arrangements made by parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between August and October 2018 and were surveyed in March-April 2019



Just over a fifth (**22%**)² of parents who had contacted Child Maintenance Options between August and October 2018 had a family-based arrangement. **15%** set up or changed their family-based arrangement after contacting Options, while **6%** 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. Please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/separated-families-population-statistics-april-2014-to-march-2017> for details.

60% of parents who had contacted Child Maintenance Options between August and October 2018 had an arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service. **57%** set up or changed their Child Maintenance Service Arrangement after contacting Options, while **3%** already had a Child Maintenance Service arrangement in place or could not remember if they set up or changed their arrangement after speaking with Options.

17% of parents had not agreed a child maintenance arrangement after contacting Options.

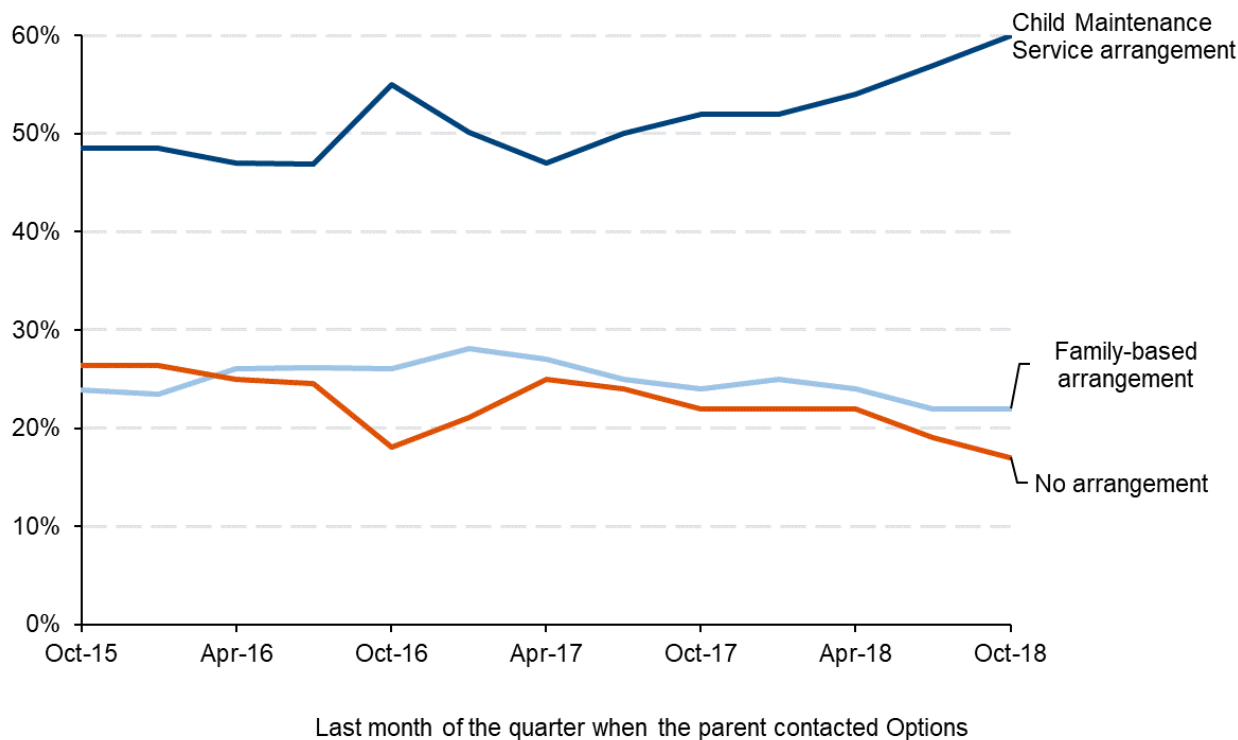
See **Table 1** for full data.

1. Child Maintenance Service Arrangements includes both Collect and Pay and Direct Pay arrangements.
2. The figures on the graph may not match the figures in Table 1 due to rounding.

Child Maintenance Arrangements

The percentage of parents choosing a Child Maintenance Service Arrangement after speaking to Options continues to increase

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



The trend of more parents opting for a Child Maintenance Service arrangement continues this quarter as **60%** of parents who contacted Options in the quarter ending October 2018 reported having a Child Maintenance Service Arrangement. This has increased by eleven percentage points from **49%** of parents who contacted Options in the quarter ending October 2015.

- This is a statistically significant difference.¹

The downward trend of parents having no arrangement continues this quarter as **17%** of parents who contacted Options in the quarter ending October 2018 reported having no arrangement. This has decreased by nine percentage points from **26%** of parents who contacted Options in the quarter ending October 2015.

- This is also a statistically significant difference.¹

The percentage of parents with a family-based arrangement continues to be fairly stable over time as **22%** of parents who contacted Options in the quarter ending October 2018 reported having a family based arrangement. This has decreased by two percentage points from **24%** of parents who contacted Options in the quarter ending October 2015.

- This is not a statistically significant difference.¹

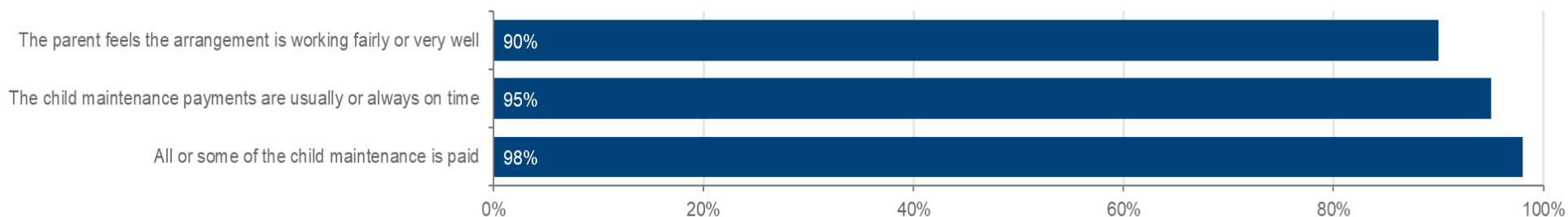
See **Table 2** for full data.

¹ (see **About these statistics** at end of report for details)

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.

90% of parents with a family-based arrangement thought it worked 'fairly' or 'very well'¹



Assessments of family-based arrangement by parents who contacted Options between August and October 2018, and were surveyed in March-April 2019

90% of parents said that their family-based arrangement was working 'very well' or 'fairly well'.

Out of the parents whose family-based arrangements involved regular financial payments, **95%** said their payments were on time and **98%** said they received 'some' or 'all' of their payment.

93% 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 3** for full data.

¹ (see **About these statistics** for details on methodology change)

Children on family-based arrangements

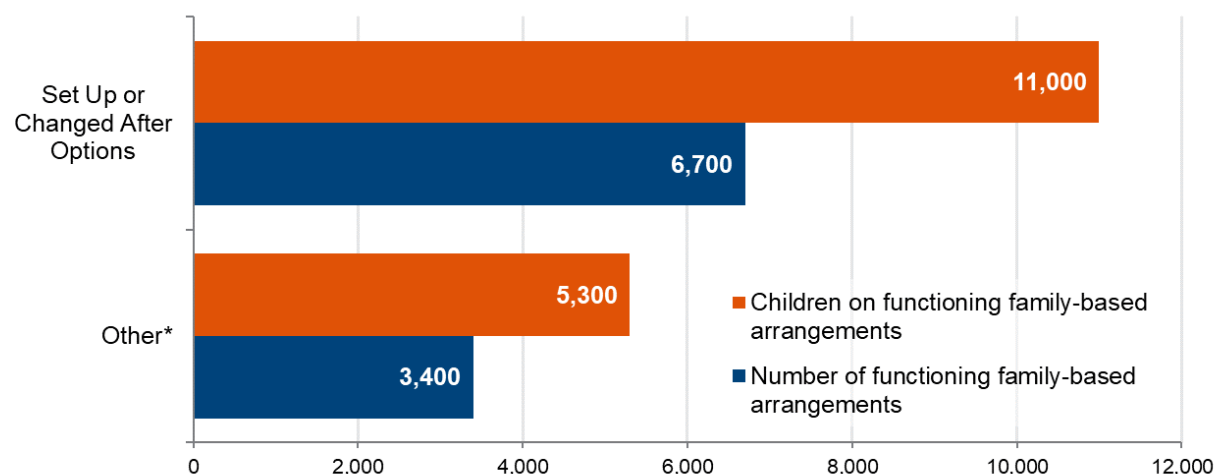
Options aims to support parents to set up arrangements that work for them. We ask parents about their arrangements to determine whether or not they are **functioning**.

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 believes it is working 'fairly well' or 'very well'.

The count of children in the below graph includes the number of **children on functioning family-based arrangements** as defined above.

6,700 functioning family-based arrangements were created after contacting Options

Functioning family-based arrangements and children on these arrangements for parents who contacted Child Maintenance Options between August and October 2018, surveyed in March-April 2019



6,700 functioning family-based arrangements were set up or changed by parents after contacting Child Maintenance Options between August and October 2018.

- **11,000** children are on these arrangements.

There were an additional **3,400** functioning family-based arrangements that might not been set up after contact with Options between August and October 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. **5,300** children were on these arrangements.

See **Table 4** for full data.

About these statistics

The data are 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 August and October 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 is unlikely to be due to chance. This publication measures statistical significance at the 95% level which means you would only expect 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. These guidelines can be found here:

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/the-code>

Changes to Publication

The methodology used for the calculations on page 5 was improved to more accurately reflect an arrangement with a regular financial payment as defined by the parent. Previous publications have not been revised.

Where to find out more

This document and the summary tables can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-maintenance-arrangements-made-after-speaking-to-cm-options-march-to-april-2019>

Older releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-based-child-maintenance-arrangements-statistics>

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

Information and statistics on the Child Maintenance Service and separated families: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/child-maintenance-facts-and-figures>