

## **Follow up response to the consultation held on the Quarterly Summary of Statistics relating to the Child Support Agency, part of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.**

### **Background**

On 5 June 2009, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (the Commission) launched an external consultation on proposals for revising the Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS) relating to the CSA, part of the Commission. The consultation document 'Child Support Agency National Statistics: A consultation on future plans' may be viewed at [http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/pdf/CSAQSS\\_consultation\\_documentation.pdf](http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/pdf/CSAQSS_consultation_documentation.pdf)

The consultation was open to everyone. The closing date for responses was 28 August 2009.

In September 2009 the Commission published its response to the consultation, 'Proposals for a revised Quarterly Summary of Statistics relating to the Child Support Agency, part of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission: Results of the external consultation and the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission's response', which can be viewed at <http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/pdf/Consultationresponse.pdf>. Within this response the Commission committed to provide a follow up response on areas that could not be immediately addressed alongside the September 2010 QSS.

### **Conclusion**

This is a follow up response to the consultation, detailing actions that have been taken over the past twelve months, and those that are still to be taken to implement further changes in line with customer feedback.

*Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission  
October 2010*

**Is the revised QSS easier to use and better focused?**

Comments Received	Commission Response – Oct 2009	Response Update – Oct 2010
<p>We have no significant concerns about the revised format for reporting. The statistics of most interest to Citizens Advice would be the headline figures as listed at the beginning, and then the enforcement data towards the end. The remaining tables would become more interesting if we were trying to explore a particular issue and wanted to examine it in more detail through the statistics. One of the areas we feel should be analysed - somehow - is whether the drop in applications resulting from the repeal of Section 6 is leaving vulnerable parents with care without recourse to support because of pressure from a non-resident parent to choose maintenance direct which might not then be paid.</p>	<p>We recognise the importance of having robust statistics in this area and the Commission is currently doing wider research on its customer base which will include vulnerable clients.</p>	<p>The scope of Commission research will be reviewed in line with the outcomes of the Spending Review.</p>

**Is the revised format and presentation helpful and accessible?**

Comments Received	Commission Response – Oct 2009	Response Update – Oct 2010
<p>There appear to be discrepancies between statistics quoted now and other sources of information e.g.; those quoted to House of Commons Work &amp; Pensions Select Committee and the Commission's website. This particularly applies to information on Enforcement actions and, in this case, figures on Liability Orders. "If different figures are quoted in different places and on different occasions then this does cast doubt on the accuracy of any of the information provided by the CSA".</p>	<p>A number of tables in the QSS are subject to planned revisions. These affect tables around intake/ clearances, closures, uncleared work, throughput and enforcement. These changes are noted within the QSS.</p> <p>We recognise that the reporting of clerical performance within all tables in the QSS is not consistent and we will be taking steps to incorporate, where possible, all clerical management information. Appendix 1 details which tables within the QSS will include and exclude clerical performance.</p> <p>Changes to numbers presented may</p>	<p>The Commission is currently reviewing its overall compliance with the National Statistics Code of Practice. As part of this we are looking at publishing a number of policies (including a revisions policy) on our website. We plan to achieve this by April 2011.</p>

	<p>occur due to adjustments to existing methodology or changes to current recording systems. In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics we will be publishing a revisions policy in due course. This will outline our response to changes to already published data.</p>	
<p>As an organisation dealing directly with single parents, there sometimes appears a mismatch between the top line performance statistics produced by the Agency and individual customers' experiences. As part of the process of making the new Commission more customer-focused, we would like to see some thought given to the production of 'richer' information concerning matters important to parents.</p> <p>For example the end to end process for appeals rather than how long to clear appeals through the first stage and how long to revise...calculations following a decision.</p> <p>As a non-departmental public body, the Commission has been proud to emphasise that one of the advantages it has as an NDPB is that it has greater flexibility to work across government. A small way it could show this is to work together with the Tribunals Service to produce statistical information which reflects the 'end to end' appeals process.</p>	<p>Wider consideration will be given to this by the Commission in line with the specific work being done on the customer base.</p> <p>We will investigate what Tribunal Service information is available and whether it is possible to generate robust statistics in this area within appropriate resource constraints. We will report on this work in a follow up response to this consultation alongside the September 2010 QSS.</p>	<p>This information is currently being compiled. We plan to work with the Tribunal Service on how this information can best be presented. Subject to quality assurance we hope to include this information within the QSS by April 2011.</p>
<p>Section 6 (Tables 13.1/13.2) - Information should be retained. The tables are useful in consideration of the impact of the abolition of Section 6 of the 1991 Act on the choices made by poor parents with care. Also of interest is the proportion of parents with care on benefit who succeed in receiving statutory child maintenance. Publication of the proportion of non-resident parents on benefit is also relevant in understanding the numbers from whose benefit set deductions should be being made.</p> <p>CMEC may argue that, now that Section 6 has been abolished, it is no longer necessary to collect this data for its own purposes. We would argue it should do so, as part of monitoring compliance with its 'maximisation of effective maintenance arrangements' duty and in the context of its obligations under the Government's child poverty strategy.</p>	<p>The repeal of Section 6 removed the legal requirement for parents with care on income-related benefits to use the services of the CSA.</p> <p>Due to the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance, methodological work is needed to provide this data. Following appropriate work and quality assurance, we will consider providing headline information in the key facts section.</p>	<p>Development of the methodology to allow reporting of cases involving parents who receive benefit is currently on a wider plan of development work.</p>

**Customer information**

Information to be included on:

- the number of parents who are receiving benefit
- the gender of non-resident parents and parents with care and;
- the employment status of non-resident parents (where there will continue to be important questions regarding the proportion of non-resident parents who are self-employed and the resources which should be devoted to ensuring that their maintenance liabilities reflect their ability to pay).
- the percentage of cases where the parent with care is on benefit with a positive maintenance outcome, as well as benefit receipt for parents with care and non-resident parents overall. In the current tables this information is always considerably out of date.

We will investigate the extent to which including information on the gender and employment of clients will add value to the information currently presented in the QSS with a view to inclusion in September 2009 QSS.

Due to the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance, methodological work is needed to report on parents receiving benefit. Following work and quality assurance, we will provide headline information in the key facts section.

Information on the gender and employment status of clients is now published within the 'key facts' section of the QSS.

Development of the methodology to allow reporting of cases involving parents who receive benefit is currently on a wider plan of development work.

## Additional Statistics requested

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<p><b>Deduction from Earnings Orders</b> Statistics showing the amount of non compliance by employers should be produced – together with the number of prosecutions made.</p> <p><b>Variations/Departures</b> How many variations / departure applications are in place – as balance against the number of applications made?</p> <p><b>Enforcement</b> It would be helpful to produce information showing the efficacy of different enforcement types – e.g. percentage of applications that are actually successful and result in money recovered for the CSA.</p> <p><b>Enforcement</b> The number of requests made for bank statements and/or requests made for bank statements directly from banks under the Social Security Fraud Act.</p> <p><b>Charging Order</b> The CSA has recently started making applications for the sale of a property of an NRP – after a Charging Order has been granted. These are useful statistics which should be disclosed by the CSA and should appear in the QSS.</p> <p><b>Enforcement</b> Statistics should be provided relating to new powers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amounts written off</li> <li>• Amounts recovered from estates</li> <li>• Deductions from bank account orders etc.</li> </ul>	<p>We are currently investigating when this information will be available.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of having robust statistics in this area and a programme of work is currently under development.</p> <p>Due to small volumes there may be some issues surrounding data disclosure as well as the fact that rounding may result in reporting to nil.</p> <p>We will report back with a further update regarding statistics on enforcement in 12 months, alongside the September 2010 QSS.</p>	<p>We have included data, within the QSS, on the number of prosecutions for the non-disclosure of information and total collections</p> <p>A new Enforcement IT system was introduced in June 2010 and work continues to fully assure the management information.</p> <p>Alongside this assurance activity we will be working with stakeholders to develop a new Enforcement table, with the aim of including this in the December 2010 QSS.</p>
<p><b>Compliance</b> A recent parliamentary answer gave information that at present does not appear in any table. The answer revealed that in the twelve months to the end of March 2009, 44 per cent of cases</p>	<p>We will carry out analysis to explore the extent to which breaking down compliance in this way would add</p>	<p>The Commission is currently developing a set of new measures that will allow us to more accurately</p>

<p>were fully compliant; 16 per cent of cases received 70-99 per cent of maintenance due; 18 per cent of cases received less than 70 per cent; and 22 per cent of cases were wholly non-compliant. If possible, we would like to see this information produced on a rolling 12 month basis, to indicate what progress the statutory service is making in improving amounts paid.</p>	<p>value to information currently presented in the QSS while ensuring it is relevant to stakeholders.</p> <p>We will explore methodology changes to ensure that such information that can be provided is not misleading to the QSS audience.</p> <p>We will report back with a further update in 12 months, alongside the September 2010 QSS.</p>	<p>report on collections against liabilities. Once development and testing is complete we will look at how this can be presented within the QSS.</p>
<p><b>Appeals</b> Information about the number of Appeals should be provided (by Scheme). It should be shown how these appeals were resolved i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By discussion / Review</li> <li>• By Tribunal</li> <li>• By Upper Tribunal</li> </ul> <p>And should also show the number of cases where the CSA's position was overturned.</p>	<p>We will include information on appeals that have been resolved by discussion/review in September 2009 QSS.</p> <p>We will investigate what Tribunal Service information is available with a view to reporting back with a further update in 12 months, alongside the September 2010 QSS.</p>	<p>This information is currently being compiled. We plan to work with the Tribunal Service on how this information can best be presented. Subject to quality assurance we hope to include this information within the QSS by April 2011.</p>
<p><b>Enforcement (Table 24)</b> This gives figures on the total processes undertaken, rather than the number of NRPs affected or the number of cases this relates to. It would be useful to have this information as well or instead of the number of processes.</p>	<p>We recognise the importance of having robust statistics in this area and a programme of work is currently under development.</p> <p>We will report back with a further update in 12 months, alongside the September 2010 QSS.</p>	<p>A new Enforcement IT system was introduced in June 2010 and work continues to fully assure the management information.</p> <p>Alongside this assurance activity we will be working with stakeholders to develop a new Enforcement table, with the aim of including this in the December 2010 QSS.</p>

