



28 January 2009

Coverage: Great Britain

Theme: Social and Welfare

CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF STATISTICS

Introduction

The CSA is responsible for tracing Non-resident Parents, working out how much maintenance they should pay, and collecting and enforcing payments.

This is the first publication since the changes in legislation introduced in October 2008. These changes removed the compulsion for parents with care on income based benefit (Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based)) to pursue a claim for child support through the Agency. After this date, it is expected that some parents with care will opt to end their child support claim with CSA. This can be seen as a fall in overall caseload after October 2008.

Following the Royal Assent of Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act in June 2008, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission was set up as a crown non departmental public body.

On 1 November 2008, the Commission took over responsibility for the Child Support Agency functions, staff and estate.

Main Findings

- In the year to December 2008, the Agency collected or arranged £1,112M in child maintenance (regular and arrears), of which £156M was arrears.
- In the three months to December 2008, maintenance had been collected or arranged by the Agency on behalf of 756,600 children (including clerical cases).
- At the end of December 2008, the CSA caseload stood at 1.3 million.

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Issued by:
Information Directorate
Department for Work and Pensions

Telephone:
Press Office: 0203 267 5144

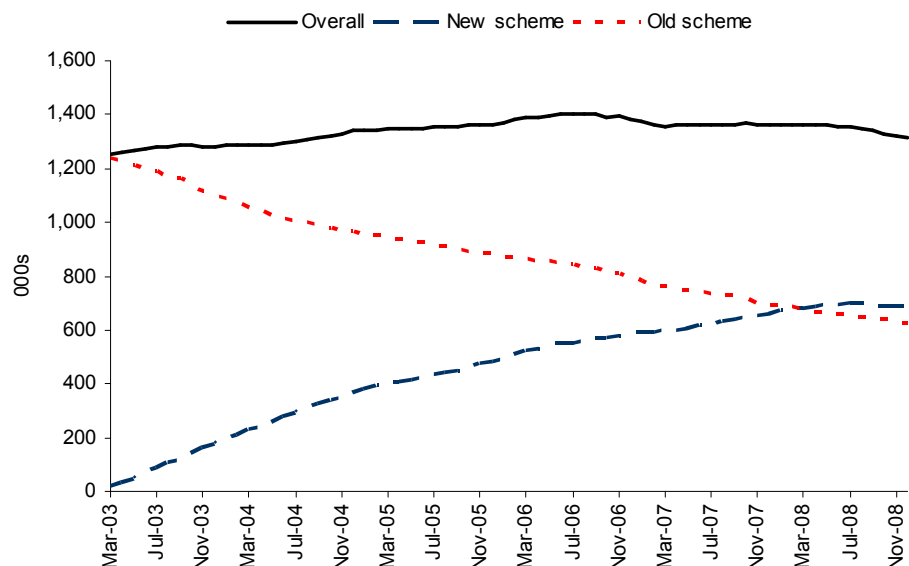
Website:
www.dwp.gov.uk

Statistician:
Lorna Morns-Stephenson
Information Directorate
Department for Work and Pensions
BP 5201
Benton Park View
Benton Park Road
Longbenton
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
NE98 1YX

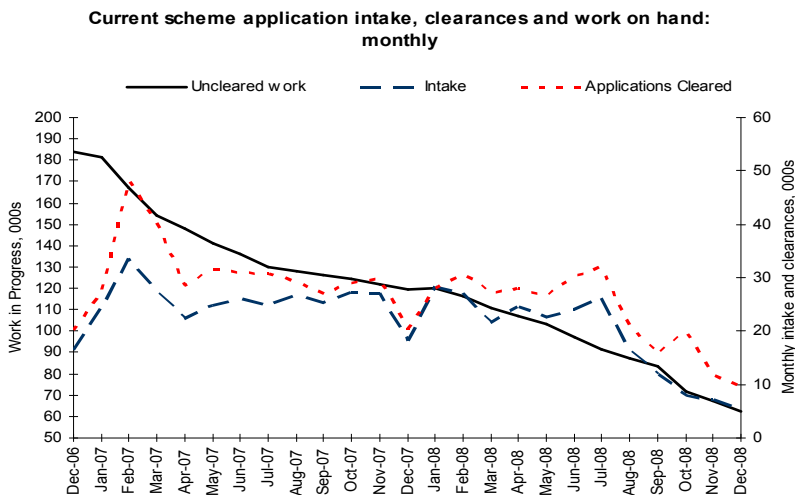
Telephone: 0191 216 6101
Email: lorna.morns-stephenson@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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Overall caseload by scheme

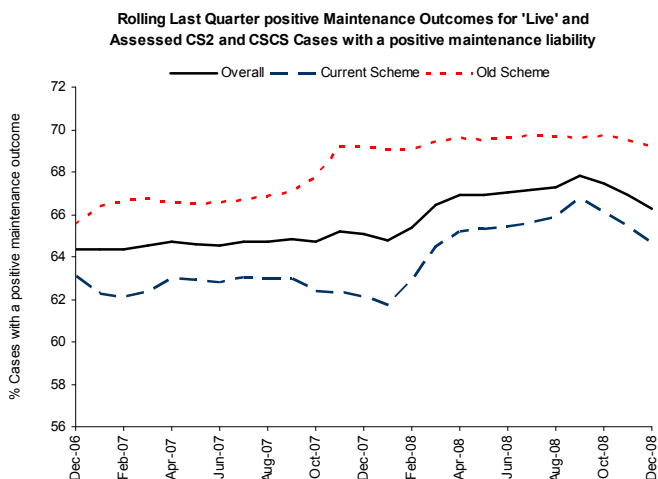


- Of all current scheme applications received in September 2008, 79% had been cleared within 12 weeks, compared to 76% of applications received in September 2007. Of those applications received in June 2008, 93% had been cleared within 6 months, up from 88% in June 2007. At end December 2008, 4% of all current scheme applications received had yet to be cleared. In December 2007, 9% of all current scheme applications were uncleared. 'Uncleared' applications may be at any stage in the application process, such as tracing the non-resident parent- only a minority will be completely unprocessed. A comprehensive definition of a clearance is provided within the QSS itself.
- Of those current scheme applications where the Agency has made a calculation and set up a collection schedule on which payments were expected from the non-resident parent, 90% of cases have made at least one payment to the parent with care.



- At the end of December 2008, there were 79,700 uncleared applications across both schemes (not including clerical performance), a fall of 46% over the previous twelve months. The volume of uncleared current scheme applications has fallen by 61,300 since December 2007 and, at 55,300 (including clerical cases) is at its lowest since May 2003. This represents a fall of 53% since December 2007.
- In the quarter ending December 2008, on average, where maintenance had been charged and then paid via the collection service, the Agency had collected 91% of the amount due. Performance in this area has decreased slightly in recent months.

- At the end of the 2007/08 financial year (latest available), the total amount of outstanding money owed by non resident parents to parents with care stood at £3.8 billion, whilst this represented an increase of £120 million since 2006/07, the average monthly rate of increase has slowed from £16 million to £10 million.



- In the quarter ending December 2008, 67% of all cases (including clerical cases) in which maintenance was due had either received maintenance via the CSA collection service, or had a maintenance direct arrangement in place.
- At the end of December 2008, the average current scheme maintenance calculation was £23 per week (including zero calculations), and that for old scheme assessments was £19.
- At the end of December 2008, the Agency had answered 99% of telephone calls available to staff to answer, within the quarter. The average waiting time was 15 seconds. This is up from 98% answered with a waiting time of 20 seconds in the year ending March 2008.

- In December 2008, there were 9,300 staff employed by the CSA (measured on a full-time equivalent basis).

Notes to Editors

The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, established as a non-departmental public body under the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act 2008, is responsible for the child maintenance system in Great Britain.

The Commission assumed responsibility for the Child Support Agency (CSA) from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 1 November 2008.

This publication, produced by the DWP Information Directorate on behalf of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, contains the most up-to-date tables and breakdowns on the CSA's two existing statutory child maintenance schemes.

The data covers the period both before and after the Commission assumed responsibility for the CSA on 1 November 2008. The data also covers the period both before and after the removal of the compulsion on parents with care who are claiming benefits to use the CSA to collect or arrange maintenance payments. The change, which came into force on October 27th 2008, affects CSA clients who can now choose to make private maintenance arrangements with the non-resident parent.

Changes in this edition

Users should be aware of changes of legislation in October 2008 which removed the compulsion for parents with care on income based benefit (Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based)) to pursue a claim for child support through the Agency. After this date, it is expected that some parents with care will opt to end their child support claim with CSA. This can be seen as a fall in overall caseload after October 2008.

The effect within QSS is:

Benefit recipients

Table 13.1 and Table 13.2 remain unchanged (benefit receipt for non-resident parents and parents with care)

New Applications

Tables 2.1 – 2.4 (new application process) continue to show "Applications received directly via Jobcentre Plus" rows, but the numbers show the falls indicated above. From October onwards, there is no Jobcentre plus intake and parents with care on benefit opting to claim for maintenance via the CSA are shown as "Private applications"

Sickness (Table 19.3)

The November and December 2008 rolling 12 month sickness absence position is currently unavailable. The data source excludes working days lost for leavers prior to our transition to the Commission, resulting in an artificially deflated annual working days lost figure.

Staff Turnover (Table 19.2)

As the Child Maintenance Enforcement Commission is not part of DWP, the Department will no longer publish a leaver rate that excludes those leaving the CSA/Commission to join the DWP.

The Commission does not have access to the DWP data that would allow separate identification of leavers by transfer to DWP and as such it is not possible to replicate the methodology as used in previous publications.

The number of permanent staff leaving the CSA/Commission has instead been included. This excludes certain categories of leavers: Those leaving as a result of a managed exit, expiry of a Fixed Term or Temporary Appointment and allows comparison between the rate of managed and unmanaged leavers. As this rate does not exclude those people who move to DWP, a key driver of turnover, this can be considered a truer reflection of turnover than previously reported.

Telephony (Table 16)

Due to the complex changes in telephony routing following PR1 a new category has been added to the telephony table. 'Calls offered to other telephony groups' include calls during working hours that are identified by the system as calls that need to be forwarded on to non-advanced telephony groups and Partner Sites. Due to this, these calls are not received into any queues that data is collected from. Of these calls it is not known how, or if, they were answered.

When there is a system failure, calls may be received by National Helpline caseworkers but are not recorded as answered or abandoned in the queue. Estimates of these numbers are not available and they are grouped together with other calls in the 'Calls for which outcome not recorded' group.

Changes in the March 2009 QSS

No definite changes are expected to be made to the March 2009 QSS.

An issue has been identified regarding nil liability cases. A scan that was run as part of the work around the legislation change that occurred in October 2008 has increased the number of cases which have a nil liability assessment but also still have a charging schedule in place. This negatively impacts the number of cases with a positive outcome and an investigation is currently underway to assess the level of impact and possible solutions. Work is currently being completed to look into this problem.

Table 29 (current scheme changes of circumstance) may be removed from future publications pending a review. Due to a change in computer system, it is not possible to complete this table on a consistent basis from September 2008 onwards.