

30 January 2008

Coverage: Great Britain (unless otherwise stated)

Theme: Social and Welfare

Ref: HSE-053

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 can collect and enforce payments.

Main Findings

- In the year to December 2007, the Agency collected or arranged £975M in child maintenance (regular and arrears), of which £116M was arrears.
- In the three months to December 2007, maintenance had been collected or arranged by the Agency on behalf of 675,000 children.
- At the end of December 2007, the CSA caseload stood at 1.4 million, a decrease of 2% at the same point in the previous year. The overall caseload fall is due to higher old scheme closures than intake to the new scheme.

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

Issued by:
Information Directorate
Department for Work and Pensions

Telephone:
Press Office: 0203 267 5144

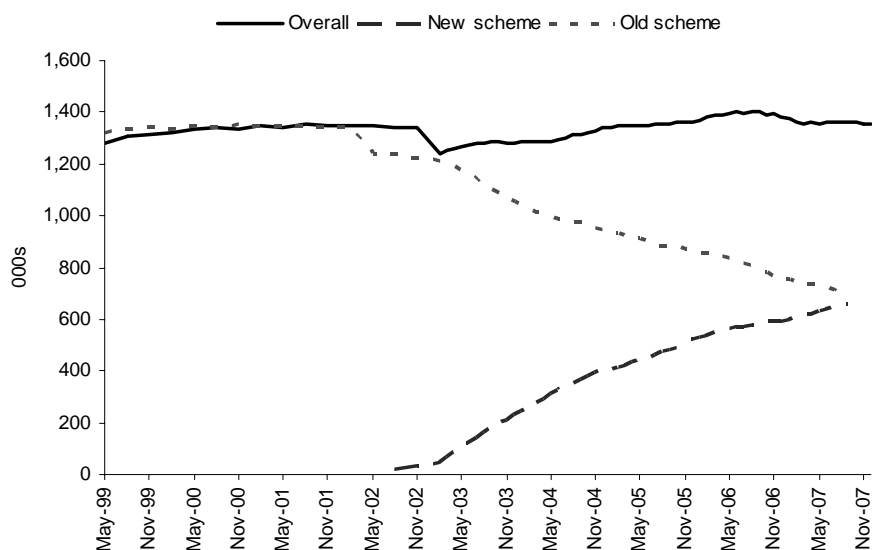
Website:
www.dwp.gov.uk

Statistician:
Stuart Grant
Information Directorate
Department for Work and Pensions
BP 5201
Benton Park View
Benton Park Road
Longbenton
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
NE98 1YX

Telephone: 0191 225 6048
Facsimile: 0191 225 3193
Email: stuart.grant@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

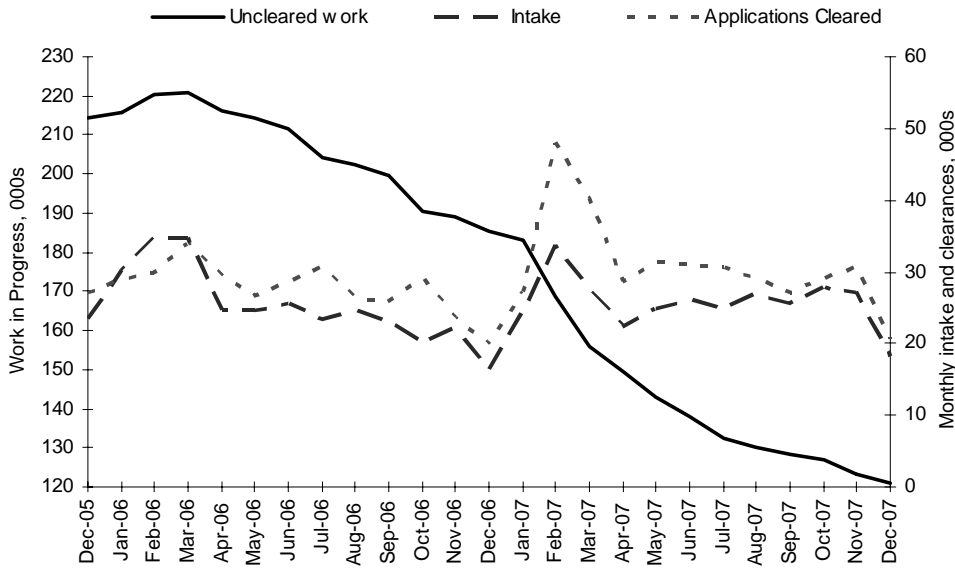
Next Publication: 30 April 2008

Overall caseload by scheme



- Of all new scheme applications received in September 2007, 76% had been cleared within 12 weeks, compared to 55% of applications received in September 2006. Of those applications received in June 2007, 87% had been cleared within 6 months, up from 74% in June 2006. At end December 2007, 9% of all new scheme applications received have yet to be cleared. In December 2006, 17% of all new 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 new 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, 86% of cases have made at least one payment to the parent with care.

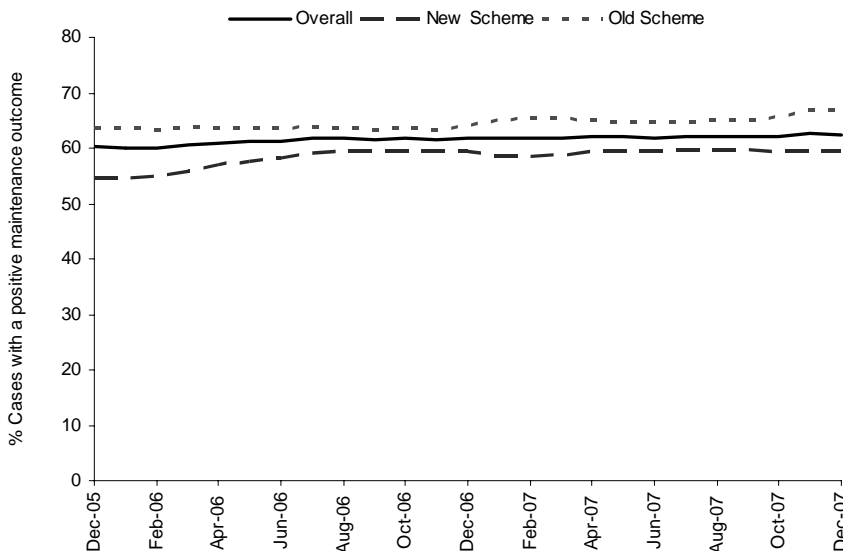
New scheme application intake, clearances and work on hand: monthly



- At the end of December 2007, there were 151,000 uncleared applications across both schemes, a fall of 37% over the previous twelve months. The volume of uncleared new scheme applications has fallen by 7,000 since September 2007 and, at 121,000, is at its lowest since October 2003. This represents a fall of 35% since December 2006.
- In the quarter ending December 2007, on average, where maintenance had been paid via the collection service, the Agency had collected 88% of the amount due. Performance in this area has been broadly flat for the last year.

- At the end of the 2006/7 financial year (latest available), the total amount of outstanding money owed by non resident parents to parents with care stood at £3.7 billion, whilst this represented an increase of £191 million on 2005/6, the average monthly rate of increase has slowed from £20 million to £16 million.

Rolling Last Quarter positive Maintenance Outcomes for 'Live' and Assessed CS2 and CSCS Cases with a positive maintenance liability



- In the quarter ending December 2007, 62% of all cases in which maintenance was due had either received maintenance via the CSA collection service, or had a maintenance direct arrangement in place. This figure has remained stable in recent months and currently equates to 501,000 cases.
- At the end of December 2007, the average new scheme maintenance calculation was £24 per week (including zero calculations), and that for old scheme assessments was £20.

- Between April 2007 and December 2007, the Agency had answered 98% of telephone calls available to staff to answer, with an average waiting time of 20 seconds, up from 97% answered with a waiting time of 26 seconds in the year ending March 2007.
- In November 2007, there were 10,000 staff employed by the CSA (measured on a full-time equivalent basis).

Notes to Editors

Launched on 5 April 1993, the Child Support Agency (CSA) is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions, set up to implement the Child Support Act 1991 and operate the new child maintenance system in Great Britain (there is a separate but parallel agency for Northern Ireland). The CSA is responsible for tracing Non-resident Parents, working out how much maintenance they should pay, and can collect and enforce payments

Prior to 3 March 2003, CSA stored information on the Child Support Computer System (CSCS). Since the introduction of the new computer system (CS2) on that date, all new Child Support applications have been assessed under a new scheme on the new system

Additional statistics

The following new series have been introduced to this QSS:

- A new table at the front of the publication summarises key measures and targets
- Accuracy: the one penny accuracy target series has been re-issued; cash value accuracy is being released as an experimental series
- The average value of maintenance assessments excluding those with nil liability is now shown in Table 15
- The number of "Direct Earnings Orders" requested by the Agency has been added to the enforcement Table 21
- Numbers have been added to tables 6, 9 and 10, which previously contained only percentages
- A telephony measure showing the percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds has been added as an experimental series. This is in Table 16
- A correction has been made to the total amount of collections as published in Table 19.5

Known Issues

Cash Compliance

The cash compliance table (Table 11) measures what proportion of monies expected from non-resident parents has been received. For example, if a non-resident parent had agreed to pay £100 per month, but only paid £70, the cash compliance is calculated as the amount received (£70) divided by amount expected (£100) i.e. 70%.

Since June 2006, CSA have been contracting out the collection of some arrears to debt collection agencies. For cases managed by debt collection agencies, the agreement to pay back the maintenance arrears and in particular the amount to be paid each month is between the debt collection agency and the non-resident parent. As such, the CSA no longer has the information to assess cash compliance for all cases. Whilst the total amount of debt is known, the monthly amount that debt collection agency non-resident parents are expected to pay is unknown.

Due to the highly complex nature of the debt collection process, it has not been possible to correct this problem. Therefore, as this problem only affects arrears accounts and not ongoing regular payments, Table 11 (cash compliance) will be published for regular maintenance accounts only. Some other tables are affected by the same problem to a lesser degree. These tables will carry a footnote indicating the problem.

At present it is not possible to correct the figures for this problem. Information from Debt Collection Agencies is not sufficient to plug the gaps in the data.

Financial tables

A problem has been discovered with how some money received by the Agency is being counted. In simple terms, only those receipts which the Agency has linked to requested payments from non-resident parents are counted. However, this excludes some payments totalling around £2M per month (against total monthly child maintenance receipts of £56M). In the quarter ahead, we will be working to correct this omission. As a rough guide, we expect the correction to:

- increase the percentage of cases with a positive maintenance outcome (table 7.2) by 1 percentage point;
- increase the number of children receiving maintenance (table 28) by 18 thousand (a 3% increase)
- increase the amount of arrears collected. It is not possible to estimate the amount at this stage.

The following tables will be affected by these corrections:

Maintenance Outcomes based

CSA Table 7.2: Maintenance Outcomes

CSA Table 13.1: Percentage of Cases where the Parent With Care is on Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (income based) with a positive maintenance outcome

CSA Table 28: Number of Children Receiving Maintenance or with a maintenance direct agreement in place

CSA Table S4a: New scheme maintenance outcomes by Local Authority of Non-resident Parent: December 2007

CSA Table S4b: New scheme maintenance outcomes by Parliamentary Constituency of Non-resident Parent: December 2007

Arrears amounts

CSA Table 12: Arrears Collected as a Percentage of Arrears Accrued

CSA Table 19.5: Maintenance Collected

Compliance Tables

Table 6: Status of Assessed/Calculated Cases

Table 7.1: Case Compliance

Table 8.2: Fully Compliant Cases as a Percentage of all Compliant Cases

Table 10: Method of Collection: Compliance

Table 11: Cash Compliance

Table S3a: New scheme case compliance by Local Authority of Non-resident Parent: December 2007

Table S3b: New scheme case compliance by Parliamentary Constituency of Non-resident Parent: December 2007

Other tables

CSA Table 8.1: Collection Rate

Clerical Cases

The figures include the majority of the cases that have been (or are being) progressed as clerical cases. However, the tables reflect the position at the point the case became clerical. Some work was undertaken to investigate the clerical caseload and its interaction with CS2.

The outcome of cases now being managed clerically is not reflected in the Maintenance Outcomes and Compliance tables. The record of the case remains on CS2 but receipts will not be associated to the case on the system. Therefore, if the case was charging at the time it was removed from CS2 the case will now class as a negative outcome for the Agency. Outcomes for clerical cases which have never been on CS2 are also not reflected.

It is not currently possible to fully integrate the clerical caseload in these tables but we expect to include some information on clerical cases in the summary table in the next QSS release.

These changes will raise the reported level of historical performance as well as the current level of performance, and should not necessarily be interpreted as an improvement in performance over time.

Changes planned for next edition

In the March 2008 QSS, we expect to:

- Issue a corrected set of financial series
- Make a small change to around 1,500 cases which have a maintenance direct agreement but are currently coded as "Assessed, not charging"
- Add information on clerical figures to summary table