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Coverage: Great Britain (unless otherwise stated)

Theme: Social and Welfare

CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF STATISTICS

Introduction

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

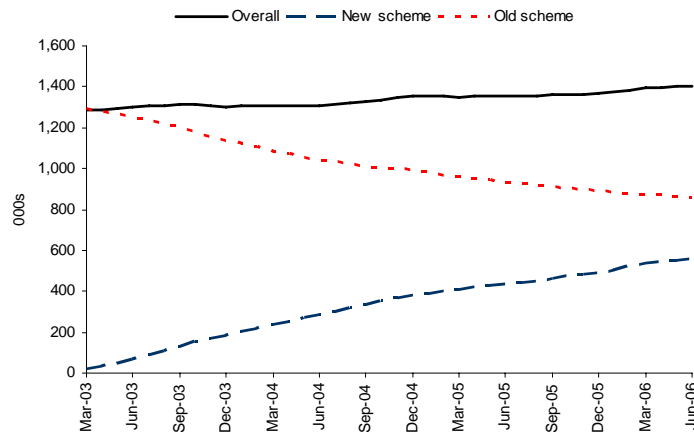
Prior to 3 March 2003, CSA stored information on the Child Support Computer System (CSCS). Since the introduction of the new computer system (CS2) on that date, all new Child Support applications have been assessed under a new scheme on the new system

This edition of the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics contains a number of revisions to historical figures published in earlier editions. For further details see the Notes to Editors.

Main Findings

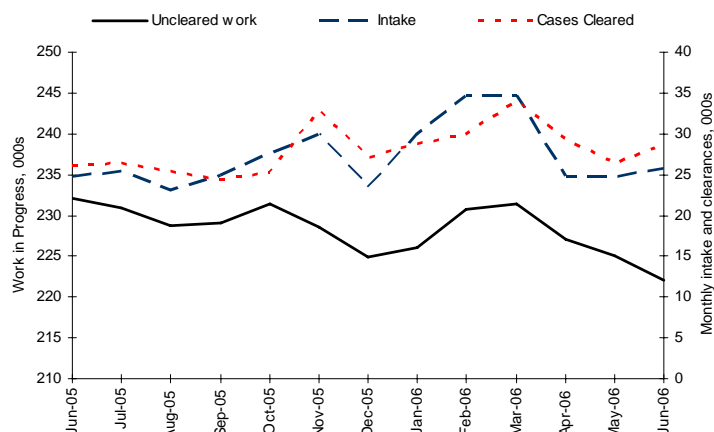
- At the end of June 2006, the CSA caseload stood at 1.4 million, an increase of 4% at the same point in the previous year.

Overall caseload by scheme



- At the end of June 2006, there were 274,000 uncleared applications across both schemes, a fall of 10% over the previous twelve months. The volume of uncleared new scheme applications has fallen by 9,000 since March 2006 and, at 222,000, is at its lowest since October 2004.

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



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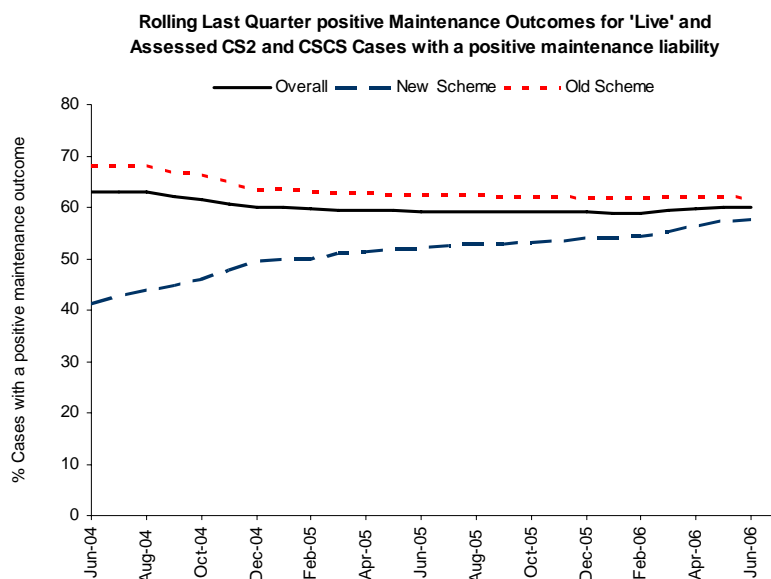
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- The mean average processing time for new scheme applications cleared in June 2006 was 217 days (31 weeks), with 50% cleared in 89 days (13 weeks) or less. The mean average age for uncleared cases was 487 days (70 weeks). A comprehensive definition of a clearance is provided within the QSS itself.
- Of all new scheme applications received in April 2006, 36% had been cleared within 6 weeks, compared to 25% of applications received in April 2005. Of those applications received in December 2005, 71% had been cleared within 6 months, also up from 52% in December 2004. However, it should be noted that 23% of all new scheme applications received have yet to be cleared.
- In the quarter ending June 2006, 60% 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, a figure that has remained broadly flat since December 2004. Whilst old scheme performance has remained flat, at 62%, since June 2005, that for new scheme has increased steadily from 52% to 58% over the same period.



- In the quarter ending June 2006, on average, where maintenance had been paid via the collection service, the Agency had collected 90% of the amount due. Performance in this area has been broadly flat for the last year.
- At the end of the 2005/6 financial year, the total amount of outstanding money owed by non resident parents to parents with care stood at £3.5 billion, whilst this represented an increase of £240 million on 2004/5, the average monthly rate of increase has slowed from £23 million to £20 million.

- At the end of June 2006, the average new scheme maintenance calculation was £23 per week (including zero calculations), and that for old scheme assessments was £22.
- On average, in the 12 months ending June 2006, 81% of new scheme cases and 85% of old scheme cases were found to be accurate to the nearest penny, up from 76% and 77% respectively in the year ending June 2005.
- In the quarter ending June 2006, the Agency had answered 97% of telephone calls available to staff to answer, with an average waiting time of 24 seconds, up from 91% answered with a waiting time of 59 seconds in the year ending March 2006.
- In June 2006, there were 11,300 staff employed by the CSA, with an average of 11.9 days sickness absence in the previous 12 months, down from 15.1 days in June 2005. The staff turnover rate in the year ending May 2006 was 14%, down from 17% a year earlier. This includes staff who left the Agency to move to a post within the DWP as well as those who left the Agency for posts outside the department.

Notes to Editors

Revisions to previous releases

This edition of the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics contains a number of revisions to historical figures published in earlier editions. There are two reasons for these revisions:

- Further improvements to the data source from which statistics relating to new and old scheme cases on the new computer system are derived. Over the last 18 months, DWP analysts have been working with the CSA to improve the quality and breadth of available management information, which have resulted in considerable improvements to the scope and content of the Quarterly Summary of Statistics. The latest phase of such improvements, all of which are subject to rigorous quality checks of a National Statistics standard, have resulted in the following changes to previously published data:
 - A significant reduction, of around 50,000 in the volume of “uncleared applications”. This is because the improved data source better identifies uncleared potential applications received via Jobcentre Plus. We were expecting this change, and the potential for future revision was noted on the relevant tables in the last issue of the QSS.
 - Greater coherence between the tables – of which tables 1 – 15 and tables 23 - 27 are now all produced from the same data source.
 - Reduction in the overall caseload across both schemes – we can now exclude cases that have been cancelled or withdrawn and are awaiting closure.
 - A reduction in old scheme Interim Maintenance Assessment (IMA) cases. We have excluded around 15 thousand IMAs that have in fact been closed.
- A change to methodology in that Old Scheme Interim Maintenance Assessments are now, for the first time, included in all the relevant tables for consistency with current CSA target definitions, and to provide a fuller picture of performance across the whole caseload. Since compliance is lower on these cases, performance against the relevant indicators is lower by a few percentage points.

New Tables

As a promised in the DWP response to the CSA National Statistics Consultation, this edition of the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS) contains a number of new tables. These tables relate to:

- Outstanding debt (table 22)
- Breakdown of the uncleared applications by stage in the application process (table 2.1)
- Information at parliamentary constituency and local authority level (table 26 and table 27)
- More breakdowns to be included, similar to those which were previously published for the Old Scheme data. For example: gender, age and Government Office Region (table 23-25)
- Staff turnover (table 19.2)

We also committed to the provision of tables relating to Migrated and converted cases, administration costs and compensation in the June QSS, but have unfortunately been unable to produce these in time for this publication due to difficulties in establishing a consistent time series with supporting contextual information to allow for robust comparison. We will aim to ensure their inclusion in the September QSS, due for release in October 2006.

The National Statistics consultation response can be found at:

http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/child_support/CSA_External_consultation_response_draft10.pdf

The Child Support Agency announced new client service standards in April and performance information is included for two of the service standard areas (on telephony and appeals - appeals information is included for the first time in the QSS). Work is ongoing to improve management information against the other service standards, and will be published in the future.

The new tables can be found with the usual tables at:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/csa.asp>