

CMS CHILD MAINTENANCE CHOICES SURVEY

FINAL REPORT

March 2017

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Background to Research.....	3
Aims and Objectives.....	5
Methodology.....	5
Section 1: Choices Survey Results	12
1.1: Where did the respondent hear about Choices?	13
1.2: Role of Choices Customers	14
1.3: Reasons for contacting Choices.....	14
1.4: Clarity of information provided on the different options for child maintenance	15
1.5: Reasons why customer felt that the options were not explained clearly	15
1.6: The listening and empathy skills of Choices staff.....	16
1.7: Reasons why the customer felt the Choices staff member failed to listen and understand their circumstances	17
1.8: Information supplied by Choices relating to social welfare benefits	18
1.9: Other organisations discussed by Choices staff	18
1.10: Organisations discussed with Choices.....	19
1.11: Benefits of discussing other organisations	19
1.12: Helpfulness if organisations had been discussed	20
1.13: Areas of support that would be helpful	21
1.14: Information provided by Choices on the online calculator	21
1.15: Number of Children discussed during Choices contact.....	22
1.16: Further action taken following contact with Choices.....	22
1.17: Helpfulness of Choices	23
1.18: How Choices helped	24
1.19: Satisfaction of Child Maintenance Arrangement	24

1.20: Type of Arrangement being set up	25
1.21: Use of Choices Website	25
1.22: Helpfulness of the Choices Website.....	26
1.23: Reasons for not using the Choices Website	26
1.24: Satisfaction with the quality of information supplied during contact with Choices.....	27
1.25: Satisfaction with the ability of the call handler to deal with additional queries	28
1.26: Satisfaction with the instructions of the call handler on how to progress their case	28
1.27: Satisfaction with advice provided on other agencies to help set up a Family Based Arrangement.....	29
1.28: Satisfaction with the overall service level of Choices	30
1.29: Reasons why customers were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	30
1.30: Recommendation of Choices to others	31
1.31: Reasons for not recommending Choices to others	31
1.32: Other services customers would like to avail of through Choices	32
Section 2: Equality Questions	33
Appendix A:Survey Questionnaire	36
Appendix B:Background Quality Report	47

Executive Summary

In 2016 the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) commissioned a survey of people who had recently been in contact with Child Maintenance Choices. The purpose of this survey was to gain feedback about the level of service provided by Choices. Responses were collected from individuals who had differing roles. These were Parents with Care (PWCs), Non Resident Parents (NRPs), and those who were contacting Choices on behalf of someone else.

The fieldwork was carried out by an independent survey team over a three week period (from 23rd May 2016 until the 10th June 2016).

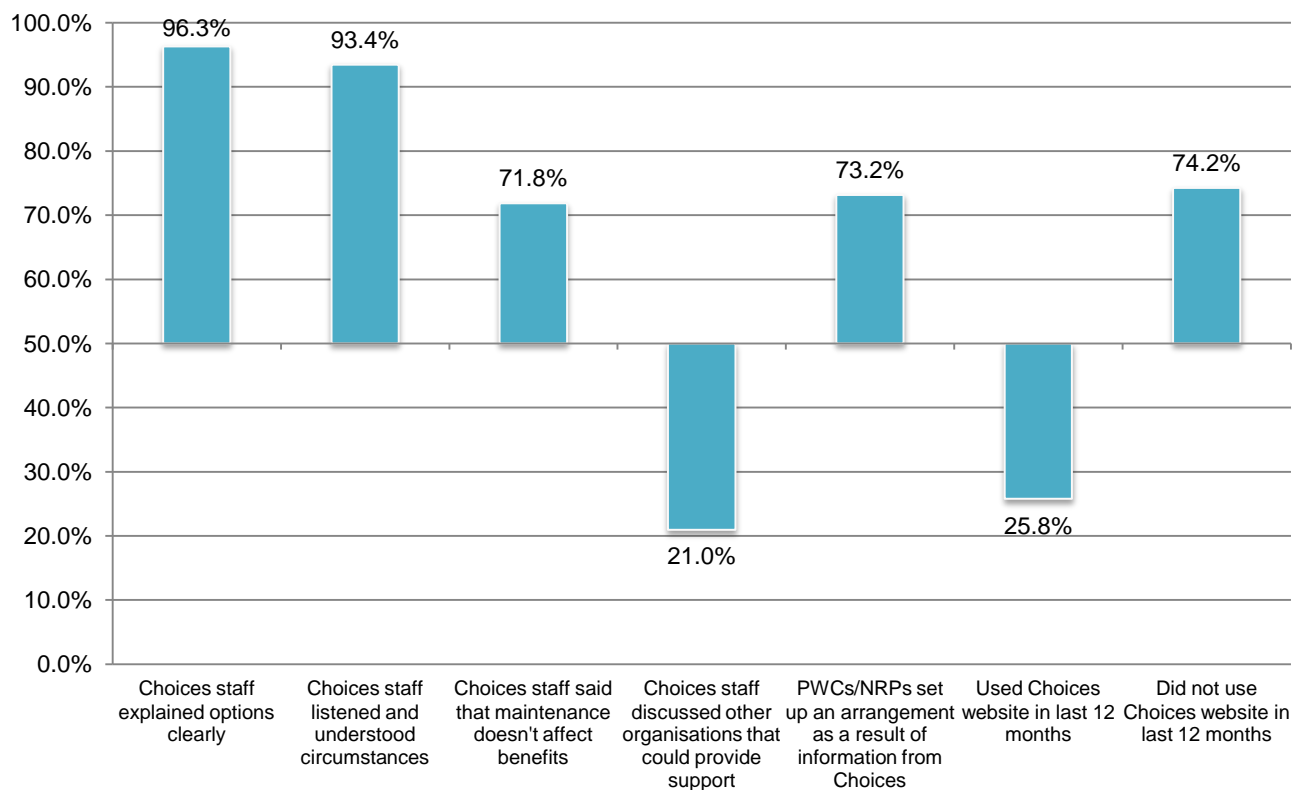
Top Line Survey Findings

The majority (88.8%) of those who had been in contact with Choices were Parents with Care (PWCs). One in ten (9.8%) were Non Resident Parents (NRPs).

When respondents were asked about the last time they contacted Choices the main reason given for their contact was to see what their choices around Child Maintenance were (60.4%).

Figure 1 below shows a summary of the top line findings from the survey.

Figure 1: Summary of Top Line Findings



When customers were asked if they felt the Choices staff member had explained the options around child maintenance to them clearly the majority (96.3%) confirmed they had.

When asked if they felt the Choices staff member had listened to them and understood their circumstances, more than 9 out of 10 (93.4%) indicated that they had felt that this was the case.

When customers were asked if the Choices staff member had informed them that receiving Child Maintenance would not affect their Social Security Benefits, Housing Benefits and Tax Credits, the majority (71.8%) indicated that they had been advised of this.

Just over one fifth of respondents (21.0%) stated that the Choices staff member had discussed other organisations with them which may have been able to provide further support.

As a result of the information the PWCs and NRPs received from Choices, nearly three quarters (73.2%) were able to set up an arrangement. These were either statutory (45.5%) or private (27.7%) arrangements. A further one in ten (11.3%) respondents was still in the process of setting up an arrangement.

Those who found their contact with Choices helpful were asked how it helped. Nearly half (46.8%) stated that it had clarified their thinking in relation to the best child maintenance arrangement for their family.

Customers were asked if they had used Child Maintenance Choices website in the previous 12 months. One quarter of respondents (25.8%) advised they had used the website while three quarters (74.2%) had not.

Background to research

Child Maintenance Choices was launched in January 2011 to provide information and support to parents (or legal guardians) to enable them to put effective child maintenance arrangements in place. The service was initially established in 2008 and was previously known as the Child Maintenance Information and Support Service.

Following the introduction of the new CMS2012 system (a statutory scheme which replaced any previous schemes; this was initially brought in for a small number of new child maintenance applications, but is now used for all new applications) in December 2012, Choices provides a vital gateway between parents and the statutory scheme. From the 25th November 2013 statutory scheme customers cannot open a case without receiving a unique reference number (URN) from Choices.

Child Maintenance Choices provides support to:-

- Separated or separating parents, or those who have never been in a relationship with the other parent;
- Family, friends or anyone seeking information on child maintenance.

Child Maintenance Choices provides free information and support to help both parents make informed choices regarding Child Maintenance. The Choices service provides information on all child maintenance options available to parents, which are:-

- Family Based Arrangements (FBA) – all aspects of child maintenance are arranged directly between the parent with care and the non resident parent. CMS do not carry out the calculation or collect the child maintenance.
- A statutory Arrangement – the child maintenance amount is calculated by CMS with payments either made through the service or directly between parents.
- Consent order / Court Order – This is an official ruling made by a court, whereby both parents agree how much child maintenance is going to be paid and how often. This is made into a legally binding contract through the courts and can be done privately between both parents or through a solicitor.

Child Maintenance Choices:-

- Talks parents through the options for putting child maintenance in place;
- Helps parents conclude if the child maintenance arrangement already in place is the right one for all parties.
- Provides an indicative assessment of potential maintenance levels a parent would expect to pay/receive if they applied for child maintenance through the statutory maintenance service;
- Offers practical information and literature in areas linked to child maintenance.
- Signposts parents to other organisations which may be of assistance to them, for example financial or legal organisations, etc.
- Acts as the gateway to the statutory service where required.

Aims and Objectives of the Choices Survey

The Child Maintenance Service commissioned the Department for Communities (DfC) Analytical Services Unit (ASU) to conduct a telephone survey of their Choices helpline customers.

The aim of the Choices Survey was to establish if CMS Choices was providing a high standard of service to customers who were seeking information regarding Child Maintenance.

The objective of the survey is to identify key areas where Choices staff may require extra training and where there are particular weaknesses within the organisation, with the ultimate aim being to improve the overall service customers receive.

Methodology

The survey was aimed at all those who had contacted Child Maintenance Choices between October 2015 and February 2016 and who had agreed to be contacted again. There were 1,262 individuals who met these criteria.

An independent survey team attempted to contact all 1,262 customers via telephone over a three week period between 23rd May 2016 and 10th June 2016. This resulted in 458 completed surveys which exceeded the original target of 400.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire for the survey was developed by ASU in conjunction with CMS prior to fieldwork. The questionnaire was a modified version of that used for the 2012 Choices Survey. It was estimated that each survey would take no more than fifteen minutes to complete.

The survey questionnaire is included in Appendix A of this report.

Sample

In order to meet the aims and objectives of the survey, 1,262 customers were contacted, with a target to complete 400 interviews. The overall number of completed surveys was 458.

Timescales and Response Rate

All 1,262 customers had been asked to provide contact details should they wish CMS to contact them for a survey in the future. By providing their details it was assumed they had agreed to participate in the survey.

All survey interviews were conducted by telephone using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) with results recorded onto Survey Monkey.

Personal contact details for those selected within the sample were provided to the survey team, who carried out the fieldwork for the telephone survey between the 23rd May 2016 and 10th June 2016.

Out of the 1,262 customers contacted:

- one fifth (20.2%) declined to participate in the survey.
- A further third (32.4%) of customers were unreachable due the number being busy, having an engaged tone, not answering or the call going to voicemail.
- More than 1 in 10 had an invalid number or the number was no longer recognised (11.1%).
- Over one third (36.3%) of respondents completed the surveys.

Table 1: Response Rates

	Freq	%
Customers Allocated	1,262	100.0%
Surveys Completed	458	36.3%
Busy/ Engaged/ No answer/ Voicemail	409	32.4%
Not participating	255	20.2%
Number not recognised/ Invalid Number	140	11.1%

Sampling Errors and Confidence Limits

Any sample is unlikely to reflect precisely the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn due to both sampling and non-sampling errors. An estimate of the amount of error due to the sampling process can be calculated. For a simple random sample design, in which every member of the sampled population has an equal and independent chance of inclusion in the sample, the sampling error (s.e.) of any percentage, p , can be calculated by the formula:

$$\text{s.e.}(p) = \sqrt{p*(100-p)/n}$$

Where 'n' is the number of respondents on which the percentage is based.

A confidence interval for the population percentage can be calculated by the formula:

$$\text{95\% confidence interval} = p \pm (1.96 * \text{s.e.}(p))$$

The convention is to have a sample size sufficient to ensure a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5%. A confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5% means that we are 95% confident (1 in 20 chance of being wrong) that the sample estimate will lie within 5% of the actual incidence in the population. For example, if your sample results showed that 50% of people were satisfied, then you could be 95% confident that the true level would fall between 45% and 55%.

Table 2: Example sampling errors and confidence limits

Measure	% (p)	Standard Error (p) %	95% Confidence Interval +/-
n=451 Percentage of respondents who applied to CMS for a statutory arrangement (Table 9)	45.5%	2.3%	4.6%
n=451 Percentage of respondents able to make arrangements privately (Table 9)	27.7%	2.1%	4.1%
n=451 Percentage still in the process of setting up an arrangement (Table 9)	11.3%	1.5%	2.9%
n=451 Percentage not able to set up an arrangement (Table 9)	10.9%	1.5%	2.9%
n=451 Percentage who do not want to set up an arrangement (Table 9)	2.2%	0.7%	1.4%
n=118 Agree that information provided on the website was useful (Figure 12)	89.0%	2.9%	5.6%

The following example demonstrates how the sample survey findings can be applied to CMS Choices customers. For example, the survey showed that for PWCs and NRPs who contacted Choices (451 respondents), 45.5% stated that they applied to CMS for a statutory arrangement as a result of the information provided (Table 9). Using a standard error of 2.3 and a 95% confidence interval of 4.6, we can therefore say that we are 95% sure that the true value for all Choices customers would be between 40.9% (45.5%-4.6) and 50.1% (45.5%+4.6).”

Results

This report presents the findings from the Child Maintenance Choices Survey 2016. It provides responses to each question asked during the interview, using both quantitative and qualitative data. The report has been structured in the following format:

- Section 1: Choices Survey Results
- Section 2: Equality Questions
- Appendix A: CMS Choices Survey Questionnaire
- Appendix B: Background Quality Report

As there was a low number of Non Resident Parents (NRP) who responded to the survey, it has not been possible to separate the information by parental status.

Notes

Within this report ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ have been combined as have ‘dissatisfied and very dissatisfied’ to give an overall figure. Such combined analyses were conducted on raw data and then reported as percentages.

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

For some questions, the sample size (base) is less than 100. The reader is asked to treat these results with caution. This is because, as sample size decreases, the robustness and statistical validity of the results will decrease. Sample sizes may vary slightly as responses of ‘refusal’ or not applicable have been excluded from the analysis.

Analysis is presented in accordance with the published DfC policy on statistical disclosure control (<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/analytical-services-confidentiality-statement>). As a result cells with less than 5 responses have been suppressed (denoted by *). Additional cells with 5 or more responses are also suppressed where knowledge of their value could identify other small value cells (denoted by #).

Abbreviations and Definitions

ASU – Analytical Services Unit (DfC). ASU is comprised of independent statisticians seconded by NISRA to the Department for Communities (DfC).

Child Maintenance Service (CMS) [previously known as **Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division (CMED)** and **The Child Support Agency (CSA)**] – The Child Maintenance Service is a statutory maintenance service. The overall purpose of CMS is to promote and secure effective child maintenance arrangements. To deliver this objective CMS has three core functions.

- Promoting the financial responsibility parents have for their children;
- Providing information and support about the different child maintenance options available to parents; and
- Providing an efficient statutory maintenance service with effective enforcement powers.

Choices – Child Maintenance Choices provides free impartial information and support to help customers decide on the best child maintenance arrangement for them and their families in a confidential manner. Choices helps:-

- The separated parent who has responsibility for the main day-to-day care of a child.
- The separated parent who does not have the main responsibility for the core day-to-day care of the child.
- Guardians, relatives and anyone else with an interest in child maintenance issues.

CMS2012 Scheme – This is a computer system and legislation that was initially introduced on the 10th December 2012 for a small number of new applications, and was later rolled out for all new applications from the 25th November 2013.

Consent Order/Court Order - is an official ruling made by a court, whereby both parents agree how much child maintenance is going to be paid and how often. This is made into a legally binding contract through the courts and can be done privately between both parents or through a solicitor.

DfC – Department for Communities. DfC was formed in May 2016 following the restructuring of Northern Ireland government departments.

Direct Pay/Maintenance Direct – The maintenance amount is calculated by CMS but payments are made privately between the non resident parent and the parent with care (paying parent and receiving parent for CMS2012).

Family Based Arrangement (FBA) – a Family Based Arrangement is a child maintenance arrangement that parents have agreed between themselves. This means that the child maintenance is exchanged outside of the statutory Child Maintenance Service. Family-based arrangements can also be known as: family arrangements, voluntary arrangements or private agreements.

Legacy Schemes - Cases opened prior to 3rd March 2003 were entered onto CSCS (computer system). Cases opened from 3rd March 2003 to 24th November 2013 (not including those now on the new system, CMS2012) were entered onto CS2. These systems have different legislation for working out the child maintenance figure.

NI Direct – A point of contact for various government departments in Northern Ireland. Information on CMS can be found via NI Direct.

NISRA – Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

No Arrangement – There is no child maintenance arrangement currently in place.

NRP – Non Resident Parent: The term non resident parent refers to an individual on a legacy scheme, who has a legal responsibility to provide financial care for a child (although the NRP is normally not resident in the family home, it is possible for the NRP and PWC to live together but to be separated). This parent is not necessarily the biological parent and could be an adoptive parent who has taken over responsibility for the child. On the CMS2012 scheme, NRPs are referred to as Paying Parents. Throughout this report the parent who is not normally resident in the family home (regardless of the type of arrangement they have) is termed as the NRP.

Online calculator – This is an online tool available through the NI Direct website to those who may have a child maintenance interest. It provides an approximate figure for child maintenance based on the details entered. However, it is intended only as guidance and may differ from that which the statutory maintenance service works out, or the amount that has been agreed in court as part of a consent order.

PWC – Parent with Care: The term parent with care refers to individuals on the legacy schemes who have responsibility for the majority of day to day care of a child. Child Benefit will also be in payment to this individual. However, they may not be the biological parent of the child e.g. a grandparent. On the CMS2012 scheme, PWCs are referred to as Receiving Parents. Throughout this report the parent who has legal responsibility of the child (regardless of the type of arrangement they have) is termed as the PWC.

Statutory Arrangement – The NRP or PWC can apply to the CMS to process their case and to calculate the amount which should be paid. The statutory service can collect and enforce payments on behalf of parents.

URN – Unique reference number received by customers from Choices if they want to set up a statutory agreement.

Section 1: Choices Survey Results

1.1: Where did the respondent hear about Choices?

Respondents were asked where they heard about Child Maintenance Choices. The most frequently reported answer was the Child Maintenance Service or CMS (32.2%), followed by Other Internet search (16.8%) and a friend or family member (16.8%).

Table 3: “Could you tell me where you heard about Child Maintenance Choices?”*

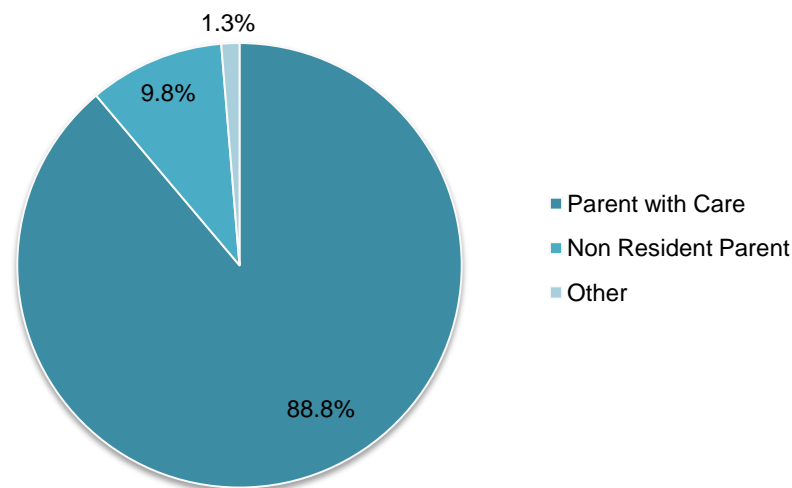
	Freq	%
Social Security Agency	11	2.4%
Child Maintenance Service or CMS (formerly CSA or CMED)	147	32.2%
Child Maintenance Options	5	1.1%
Citizens' Advice Bureau	6	1.3%
Other Internet Search	77	16.8%
Choices phoned me	*	*
Friend/family member	77	16.8%
Solicitor	29	6.3%
Media Advertisement e.g. TV, Radio, Press, Billboard	29	6.3%
Telephone directory/ Yellow Pages	*	*
Already knew about it	8	1.8%
Do not remember	31	6.8%
Other	38	8.3%
Sample Size	457	

*Multiple responses permitted so percentages will not sum to 100.0%

1.2: Role of Choices Customers

Of those who stated they were in contact with Choices on behalf of themselves or someone else (457), the majority (88.8%) were Parents with Care (PWCs). A further 9.8% were Non Resident Parents with the remaining 1.3% having another role. This breakdown is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Role of Choices customers within child maintenance situation[^]



[^]Please note some categories have been combined due to small numbers.

1.3: Reasons for contacting Choices

When asked about the last time they contacted Choices, three in five (60.4%) respondents had done so to gather information on what their choices were around child maintenance.

Table 4: “When you last contacted Choices, what information did you require?”*

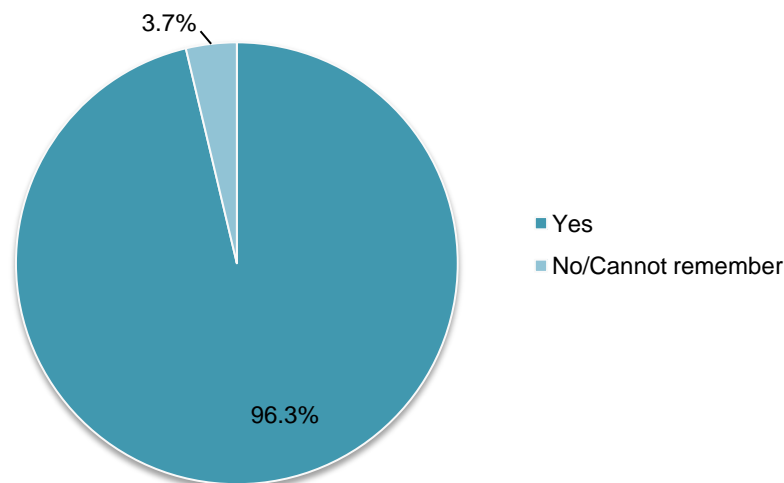
	Freq	%
What are my choices around child maintenance?	276	60.4%
How is child maintenance calculated?	59	12.9%
When should I start arranging child maintenance?	65	14.2%
Does child maintenance affect my benefits?	15	3.3%
Can I get information on charging?	81	17.7%
Information on setting up a case	11	2.4%
General Information	9	2.0%
Information on Maintenance Amount	20	4.4%
Information on new system	7	1.5%
Case Specific response not about Choices	5	1.1%
Cannot Remember	6	1.3%
Other	46	10.1%
Sample Size	457	

*Multiple responses permitted so percentages will not sum to 100.0%

1.4: Clarity of information provided on the different options for child maintenance

The majority of the 458 respondents (96.3%) felt that the Choices staff member had clearly explained what options were available to them regarding child maintenance.

Figure 3: “Did the Choices staff member explain the options around child maintenance to you clearly?”[^]



[^]Please note some categories have been combined due to small numbers.

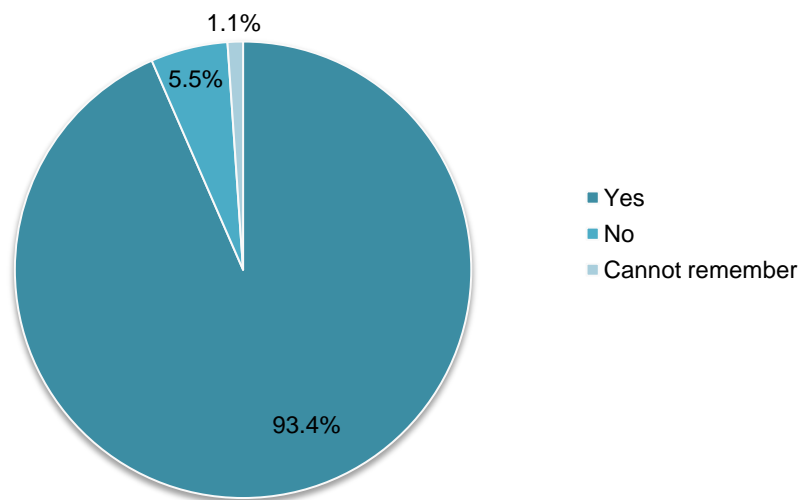
1.5: Reasons why customer felt that the options were not explained clearly

Of the 12 respondents that gave a reason as to why they felt that the Choices staff member had not clearly explained their options regarding child maintenance, half (n=6) stated that this was due to a lack of information supplied on options available. The remaining 6 respondents gave a different reason; however due to small numbers these responses cannot be reported.

1.6: The listening and empathy skills of Choices staff

Of the 458 respondents who were asked if they felt that the Choices staff member listened to them and understood their circumstances, the majority (93.4%) agreed the staff member had done so.

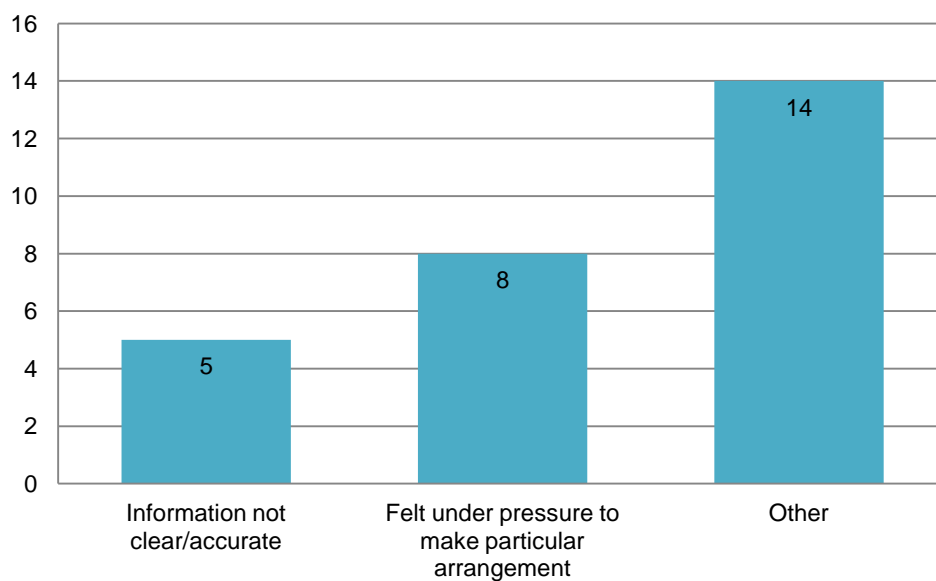
Figure 4: “Did you feel the Choices staff member listened to you and understood your circumstances?”



1.7: Reasons why the customer felt the Choices staff member failed to listen and understand their circumstances

A small number of these respondents (n=25, 5.5%) felt that the Choices staff member had not listened to them and did not understand their circumstances. The main reason that was given for this was that they felt under pressure to make a particular arrangement (n=8).

Figure 5: “Please tell us why you felt the Choices staff member failed to listen to you and understand your circumstances.”~**

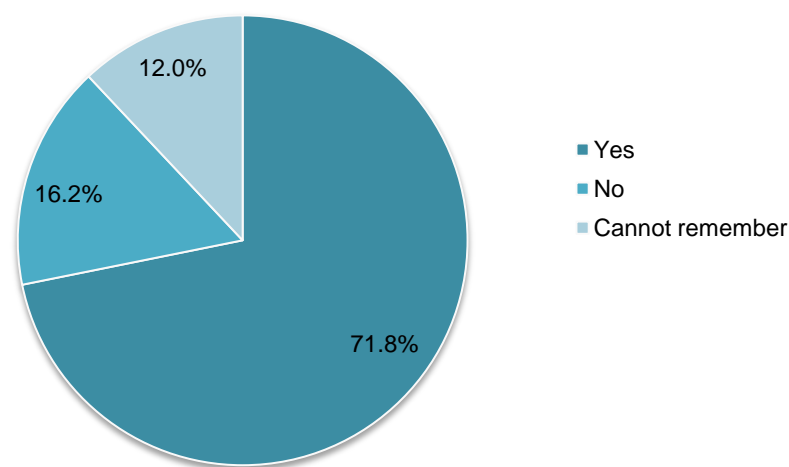


* Multiple responses permitted so sum will be greater than sample size
~Caution small numbers

1.8: Information supplied by Choices relating to social welfare benefits

When the 458 respondents were asked if the Choices staff member had informed them that receiving child maintenance does not affect their social security benefits, housing benefits or tax credits the majority (71.8%) answered 'Yes' - they had been informed. However, 16.2% advised they had not been informed, with the remaining 12.0% unable to remember.

Figure 6: “Did the Choices staff member inform you that receiving child maintenance does not affect social security benefits, housing benefits or tax credits?”



1.9: Other organisations discussed by Choices staff

Respondents were asked if Choices staff members discussed other organisations that might have been able to provide further support. Of the 458 respondents, two in five (43.4%) did not receive information on other organisations. A further 35.6% could not remember and the remaining 21.0% had received information on other organisations.

Table 5: “Did the Choices staff member discuss other organisations that might have been able to provide further support to you?”

	Freq	%
Yes	96	21.0%
No	199	43.4%
Cannot remember	163	35.6%
Sample Size	458	

1.10: Organisations discussed with Choices

Those respondents who indicated that the Choices staff member had discussed other organisations that might have been able to provide further support to them, were subsequently asked which organisations were discussed. The majority of respondents (76.6%) stated that they could not remember which organisations had been discussed, while 7.4% had discussed the Citizen Advice Bureau.

Table 6: “Which organisations were discussed?”*

	Freq	%
Family Mediation	*	*
Advice NI	*	*
Barnardos	*	*
Citizen’s Advice Bureau	7	7.4%
Gingerbread	*	*
Solicitor	*	*
Women’s Aid	*	*
Other	6	6.4%
Cannot Remember	72	76.6%
Sample Size	94	

*Multiple responses permitted so percentages will not sum to 100.0%

1.11: Benefits of discussing other organisations

The majority of respondents (62.8%) had found that the discussion of other organisations was helpful compared to 37.2% who did not (Table 7).

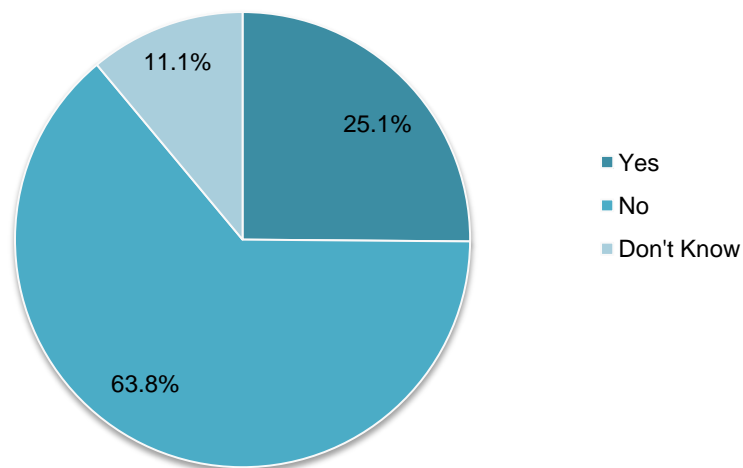
Table 7: “Did you find discussing other organisations useful?”

	Freq	%
Yes	59	62.8%
No	35	37.2%
Sample Size	94	

1.12: Helpfulness if organisations had been discussed

Of the 199 respondents who had stated that the Choices staff member had not discussed other organisations who might have been able to provide further support, the majority (63.8%) stated it would not have helped for Choices staff to do so. This compares with a quarter (25.1%) of respondents who felt it would have been helpful, while one in ten (11.1%) did not know.

Figure 7: “Would it have helped if the Choices staff member had discussed other organisations that might have been able to provide further support to you?”



1.13: Areas of support that would be helpful

Those who indicated that it would have helped to have received information on other organisations were then asked what type of support would have helped. The most common responses among the 49 who responded were that Financial advice would have been helpful (n=23); followed by personal advice (n=17) and Legal advice (n=16).

Figure 8: “What type of support would have helped?”*~



*Multiple responses permitted so sum will be greater than sample size
~Caution small numbers

1.14: Information provided by Choices on the online calculator

The majority of the 458 respondents (62.0%) were advised by Choices staff about the online calculator. However, a quarter (25.8%) of respondents were not advised and one in ten (12.2%) could not remember.

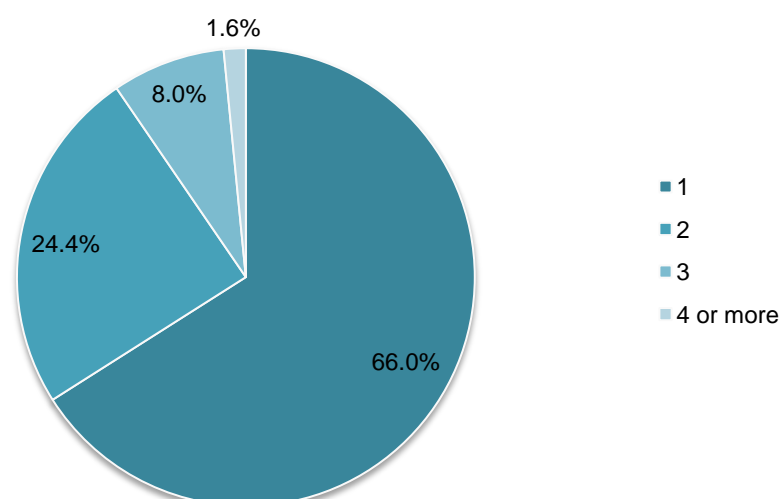
Table 8: “Did the Choices staff advise you about the online calculator?”

	Freq	%
Yes	284	62.0%
No	118	25.8%
Cannot remember	56	12.2%
Sample Size	458	

1.15: Number of Children discussed during Choices contact

The respondents who indicated that they were either a PWC or NRP were asked how many children they discussed during their most recent telephone call with Choices. Of the 450 who responded, two thirds called Choices to discuss one child (66.0%) and one quarter called to discuss two children (24.4%).

Figure 9: “When you last contacted Choices, how many children did you speak about in your conversation (by children, I mean aged under 16 or 16-19 and in full-time education)?”[^]



[^]Please note some categories have been combined due to small numbers.

1.16: Further action taken following contact with Choices

As a result of the information that PWCs and NRPs received from Choices, nearly three quarters (73.2%) were able to set up a child maintenance arrangement. These were either statutory (45.5%) or private (27.7%) arrangements. A further one in ten (11.3%) respondents was still in the process of setting up an arrangement.

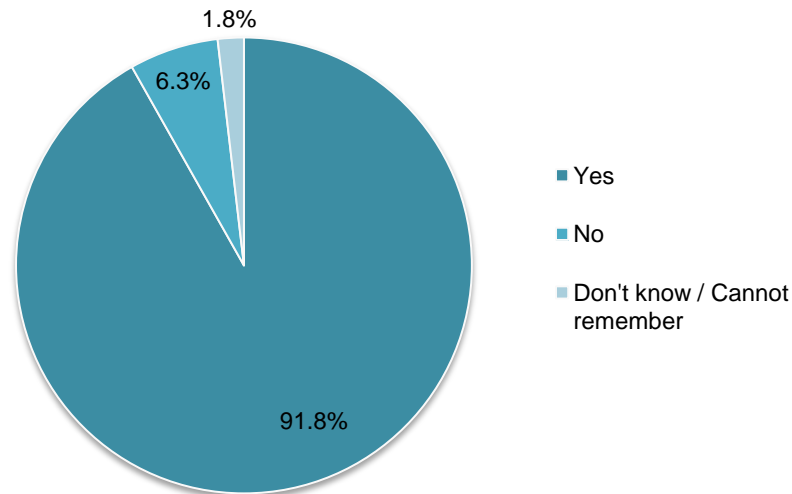
Table 9: “As a result of the information given by Child Maintenance Choices, what further action have you taken? (i.e. a family based arrangement)”

	Freq	%
I was able to make arrangements privately with my ex partner	125	27.7%
I applied to the Child Maintenance Service for a statutory arrangement	205	45.5%
I am still in the process of setting up an arrangement	51	11.3%
I have not been able to set up an arrangement	49	10.9%
I do not want to set up an arrangement	10	2.2%
No further action	5	1.1%
Other	6	1.3%
Sample Size	451	

1.17: Helpfulness of Choices

Those who were able to set up an arrangement or who were still in the process of setting one up were asked if they found their contact with Choices helpful. Of the 379 who responded, the majority (91.8%) agreed their contact with Choices was helpful. However, a small number of respondents did not find it helpful (6.3%).

Figure 10: “Did you find your contact with Choices helpful?”[^]



[^]Please note some categories have been combined due to small numbers.

1.18: How Choices helped

Those who found their contact with Choices to be helpful were asked to explain why. Almost half (46.8%) stated it had clarified their thinking in relation to the best child maintenance arrangement for their family. Over one fifth of respondents (22.4%) found that it enabled them to talk to their ex partner about a family based arrangement. Less than one in twenty (3.2%) said that it 'did not help' which conflicts with their response to the previous question, where they had indicated that they found their contact with Choices helpful.

Table 10: “How did your contact with Choices help?”*

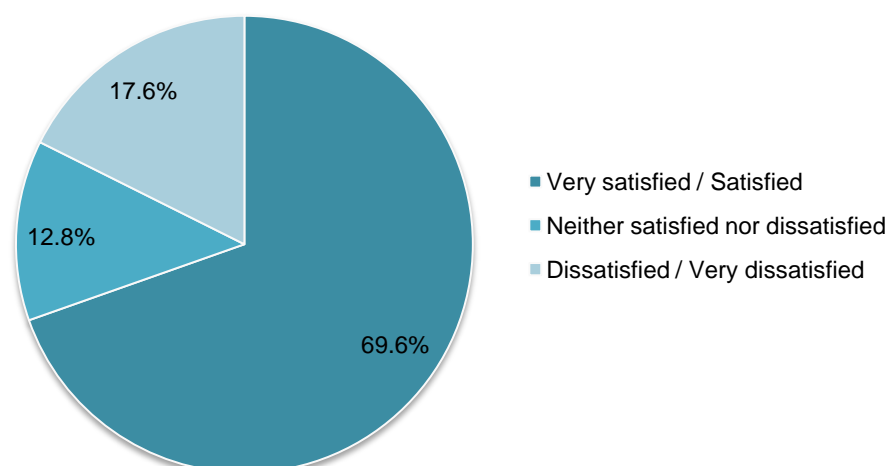
	Freq	%
It enabled me to talk to my ex partner about a family based arrangement	78	22.4%
It clarified my thinking in relation to the best child maintenance arrangement for my family	163	46.8%
It pointed me to other services which supported me in putting an effective child maintenance arrangement in place	73	21.0%
Enabled an arrangement	32	9.2%
Customer received all information they required	25	7.2%
Good service supplied	6	1.7%
Did not help	11	3.2%
Other	18	5.2%
Sample Size	348	

*Multiple responses permitted so percentages will not sum to 100.0%

1.19: Satisfaction of Child Maintenance Arrangement

Those who were able to set up an arrangement were asked how satisfied they were with their arrangement. Of the 329 respondents who answered this question, over two thirds (69.6%) were very satisfied/satisfied, while one in six respondents (17.6%) were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied.

Figure 11: “How satisfied are you with this child maintenance arrangement?”



1.20: Type of Arrangement being set up

Those in the process of setting up an arrangement were asked what type of arrangement they were setting up. The majority were in the process of setting up a statutory arrangement with the Child Maintenance Service (74.0%).

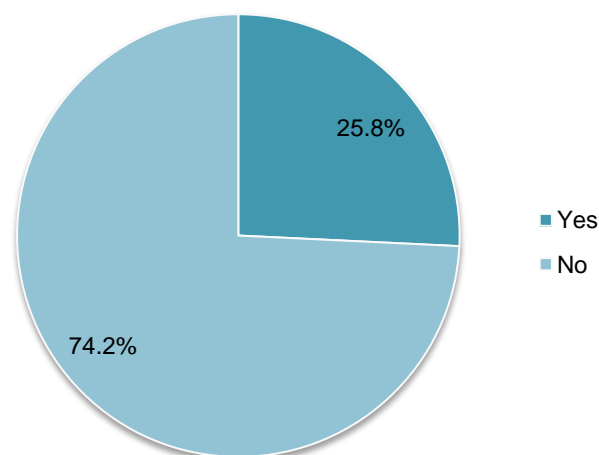
Table 11: “What type of arrangement are you in the process of setting up?”

	Freq	%
I am making arrangements privately with my ex partner	#	#
I am applying to the Child Maintenance Service for a statutory arrangement	37	74.0%
I am making an arrangement through a solicitor/ the courts.	*	*
Sample Size	50	

1.21: Use of Choices Website

The 458 respondents were asked if they had used the Child Maintenance Choices website in the last 12 months. Three quarters (74.2%) stated that they had not, compared to one quarter (25.8%) who had.

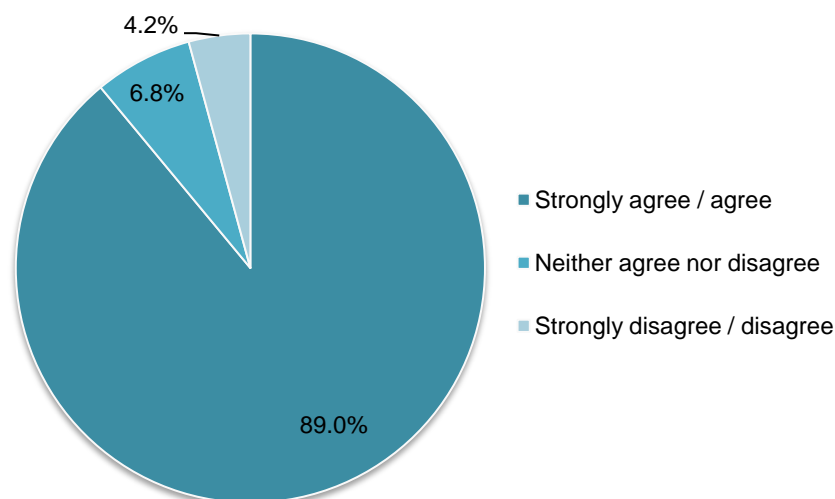
Figure 12: “In the previous 12 months, have you used the Child Maintenance Choices website?”



1.22: Helpfulness of the Choices website

Of the 118 respondents that had used the website in the last 12 months, the majority (89.0%) either strongly agreed or agreed they found the information on the website useful.

Figure 13: Agreement with “I found the information provided on the website useful”



1.23: Reasons for not using the Choices Website

The 340 respondents who had not used the website in the last 12 months were asked why this was the case. The majority of respondents (72.9%) advised that they had no need to.

Table 12: “Why didn’t you use the CM Choices website?”*

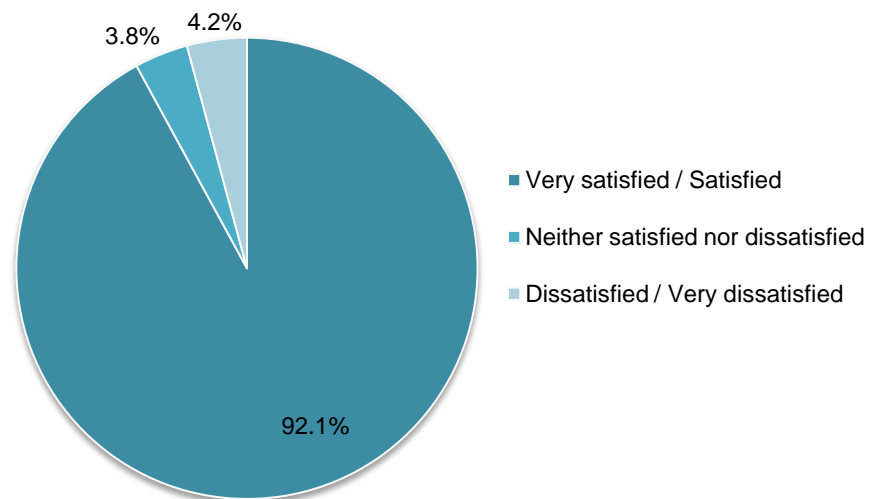
	Freq	%
I didn't know about it	48	14.2%
I have no internet access	11	3.2%
I had no need to	247	72.9%
I do not have enough time	5	1.5%
Prefer to talk to someone	18	5.3%
Already informed via phone/letter or leaflet	6	1.8%
Other	17	5.0%
Sample size	339	

*Multiple responses permitted so percentages will not sum to 100.0%

1.24: Satisfaction with the quality of information supplied during contact with Choices

When asked about the quality of the information supplied to enable the respondent to make an arrangement that suited them best, nine in ten (92.1%) of the 453 who gave a response were either very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of the information they had received.

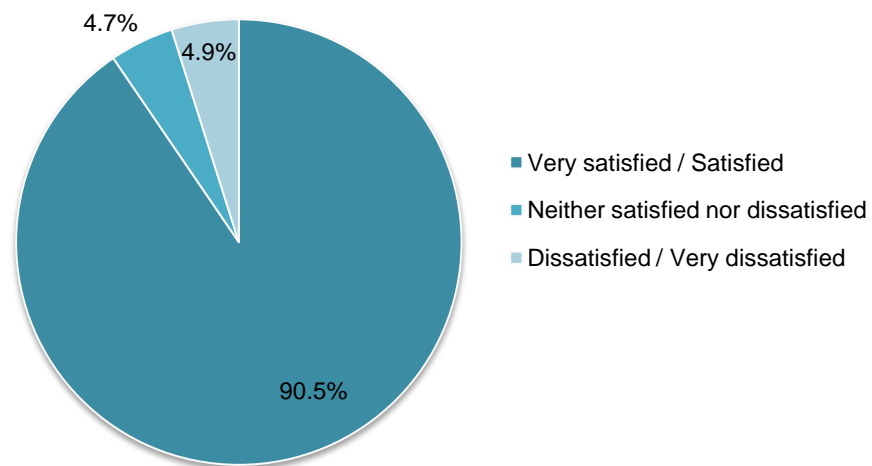
Figure 14: Satisfaction with “the quality of the information supplied to enable you to make an arrangement which suited you best”



1.25: Satisfaction with the ability of the call handler to deal with additional queries

When asked about the ability of the call handler to deal with any additional queries they may have had, nine in ten (90.5%) of the 451 respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with this.

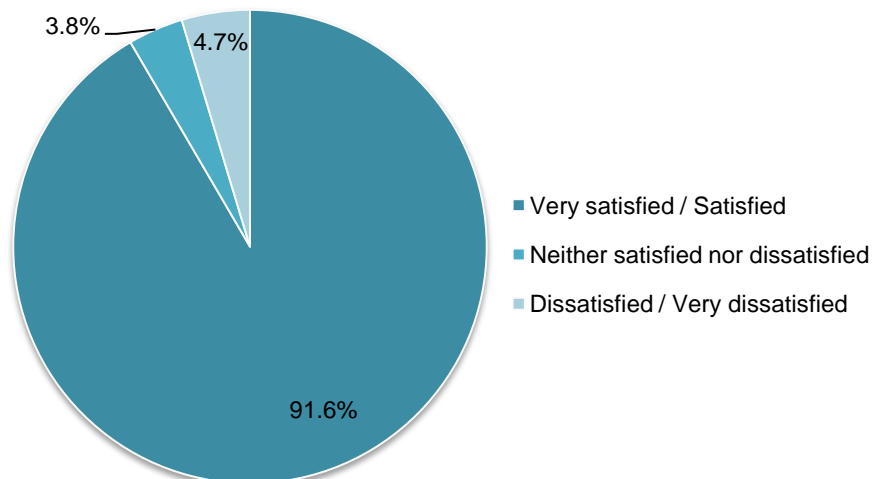
Figure 15: Satisfaction with “the ability of the call handler to deal with any additional queries you may have had”



1.26: Satisfaction with the instructions of the call handler on how to progress their case

When asked about the instructions provided by the call handler on how to progress their case, nine in ten (91.6%) of the 451 who responded were either very satisfied or satisfied with this.

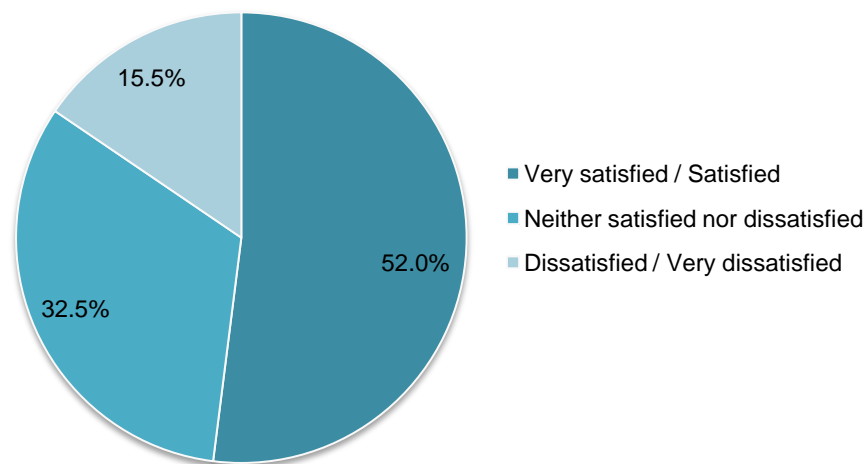
Figure 16: Satisfaction with “the quality of the instructions provided by the call handler on how to progress your case (if applicable)”



1.27: Satisfaction with advice provided on other agencies to help set up a Family Based Arrangement

Respondents were asked to state their satisfaction with the advice they received on other agencies that could offer help and support to set up Family Based Arrangements. Over half (52.0%) of the 200, who responded, stated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied, while one third (32.5%) of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the advice they were given.

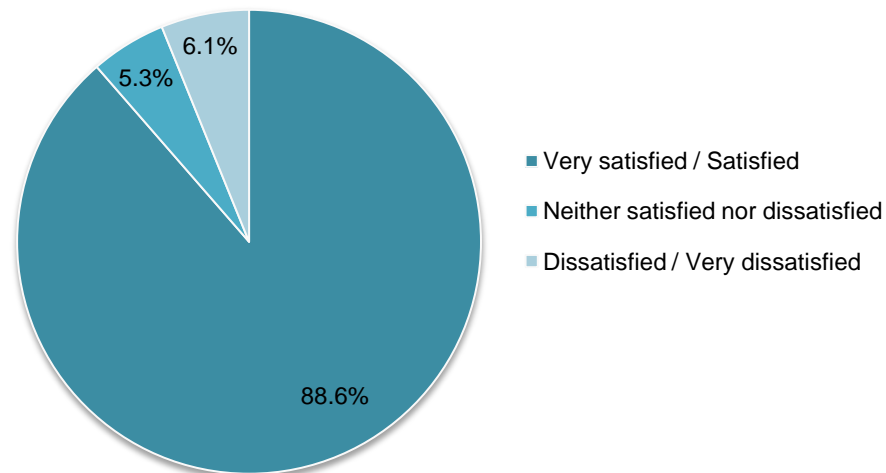
Figure 17: Satisfaction with “quality of advice on other agencies which would offer help and support to set up Family Based Arrangements”



1.28: Satisfaction with the overall service level of Choices

With regards to the overall service that respondents had received from Child Maintenance Service Choices, nine in ten (88.6%) of the 456 respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the level of service received.

Figure 18: Satisfaction with “the overall level of service received from Child Maintenance Service Choices”



1.29: Reasons why customers were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

The 59 respondents who had indicated dissatisfaction with any of the five aspects of the Choices service as detailed in section 1.24-1.28 were subsequently asked why they were dissatisfied. The most common response was that they were not advised about other agencies (n=10).

Table 13: Reasons why customers were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied*~

	Freq
I was not advised on other agencies	10
Not enough Information provided	5
I felt pressurised to make a specific arrangement	5
Other	18
Sample size	33

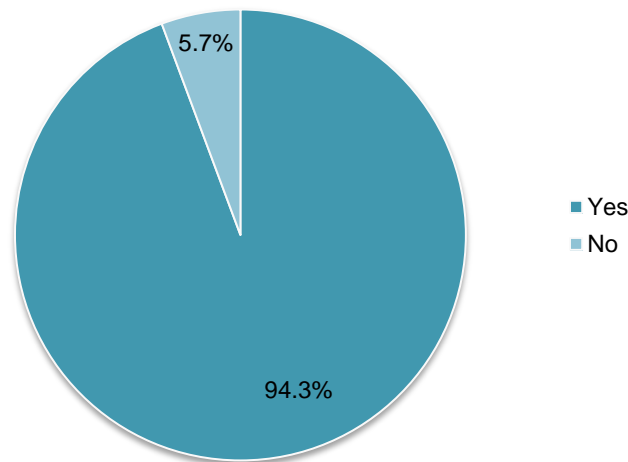
*Multiple responses permitted so sum will be greater than sample size

~Caution small numbers

1.30: Recommendation of Choices to others

More than 9 out of 10 (94.3%) of the 458 respondents advised they would recommend Child Maintenance Choices to others who may require their services.

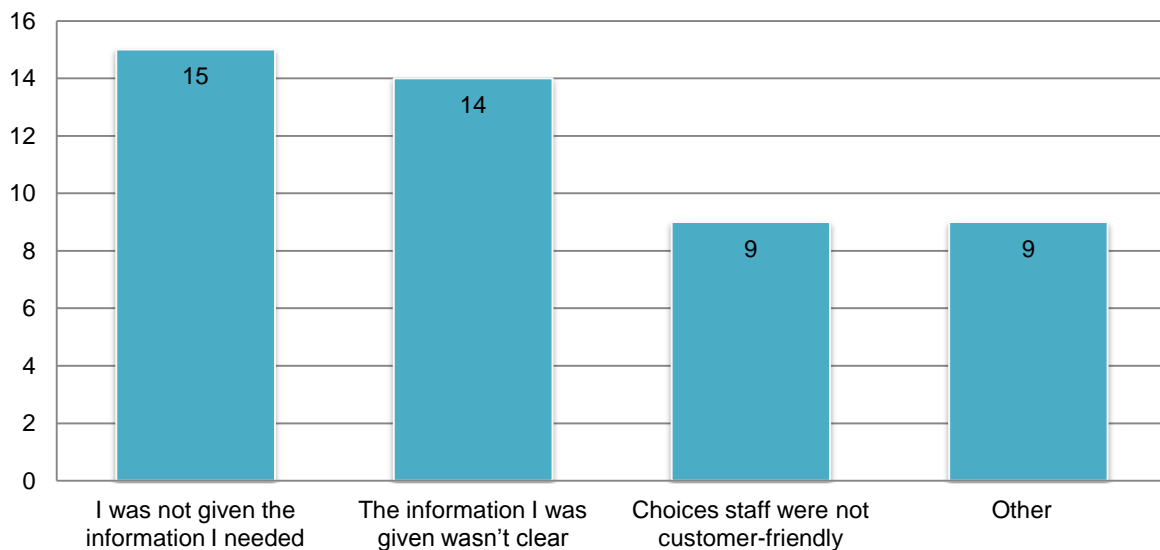
Figure 19: “If someone you knew needed information about child maintenance would you recommend Child Maintenance Choices to them?”



1.31: Reasons for not recommending Choices to others

Those respondents who would not recommend Choices to others (n=26) were asked to provide their reasoning for this. More than half advised this was because they did not receive the information they required (n=15) and the information they received was not clear (n=14).

Figure 20: “Why would you not recommend Choices?”*~



*Multiple responses permitted so sum will be greater than sample size
~Caution small numbers

1.32: Other services customers would like to avail of through Choices

Respondents were asked if there was anything else that they wanted Child Maintenance Choices to do for them. The majority (82.9%) noted that they were content with the help and advice that they had received. A small number of respondents (5.3%) suggested that a face-to-face service would be helpful.

Table 14: “Is there anything else you would have wanted Child Maintenance Choices to do for you?”*

	Freq	%
Provide a face-to-face service	24	5.3%
Make contact with other agencies/support organisations on my behalf	8	1.8%
Help me complete appropriate documentation	9	2.0%
No, content with the help/advice I received	379	82.9%
Issue with ongoing case	22	4.8%
More advice/information provided	16	3.5%
Other	15	3.3%
Sample Size	457	

**Multiple responses permitted so percentages will not sum to 100.0%*

Section 2

Equality Questions

Equality Questions

A section of questions were included in the questionnaire to collect information about the respondent's gender, marital status, age, disabilities, dependents, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. This information was collected for equality monitoring purposes. Participants were not obliged to provide responses to these questions.

Table 15: Gender of Respondents

	Freq	%
Female	399	87.9%
Male	55	12.1%
Sample Size	454	

Table 16: Age of Respondents

	Freq	%
16-24	42	9.2%
25-29	77	16.9%
30-34	93	20.4%
35-39	78	17.1%
40-44	77	16.9%
45-49	52	11.4%
50-54	21	4.6%
55-59	10	2.2%
60 or over	5	1.1%
Sample Size	455	

Table 17: Marital Status[^]

	Freq	%
Single, that is, never married and never registered in a same-sex civil partnership	256	56.1%
Married	53	11.6%
Separated, but still legally married	73	16.0%
Divorced	67	14.7%
Other	7	1.5%
Sample Size	456	

[^]Please note some categories have been combined due to small numbers.

Table 18: Ethnicity of Respondents^

	Freq	%
White	432	97.7%
Other	10	2.3%
Sample Size	442	

^Please note some categories have been combined due to small numbers.

Table 19: Religion of Respondents^

	Freq	%
No religion	42	9.5%
Catholic	186	42.1%
Presbyterian	15	3.4%
Church of Ireland	12	2.7%
Other Protestant, including not specified	155	35.1%
Other Christian, including not specified	25	5.7%
Any other religion	7	1.6%
Sample Size	442	

^Please note some categories have been combined due to small numbers.

Table 20: Long Standing Illnesses, Disability or Infirmity of Respondents

	Freq	%
Yes	92	20.3%
No	361	79.7%
Sample Size	453	

Table 21: Respondents with an Adult dependent

	Freq	%
Yes	31	6.8%
No	423	93.2%
Sample Size	454	

Table 22: Sexual Orientation of Respondents

	Freq	%
Heterosexual / Straight	#	#
Bisexual	*	*
Sample Size	438	

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

May I please speak to _____?

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is _____ and I am from the Department for Communities. I'm phoning to conduct a confidential survey of people about the Child Maintenance Choices service. Your name is one of those that has been randomly selected from a list of individuals who recently contacted Child Maintenance Choices.

Any information that you give will be treated in strict confidence. Individual results of the survey will not be passed to any other organisation or used in any way which can be associated with your name and address.

Is this a convenient time for you to participate in the survey?

1. Yes
2. No

If Yes, then continue to the survey questionnaire.

If No ask...

Is there another time we could contact you?

1. Yes
2. No

(All customers)

- Q1** Could you tell me where you heard about Child Maintenance Choices?
- 1 Social Security Agency
 - 2 HMRC/Tax Credit Office
 - 3 Child Maintenance Service or CMS (formerly CSA or CMED)
 - 4 Child Maintenance Options
 - 5 Citizens' Advice Bureau
 - 6 Through NI Direct
 - 7 Other Internet Search
 - 8 Choices phoned me
 - 9 Friend/family member
 - 10 Solicitor
 - 11 Media Advertisement e.g. TV, Radio, Press, Billboard
 - 12 Telephone directory/ Yellow Pages
 - 13 Do not remember
 - 14 Other

(If Q1=14)

- Q1o** Please specify other
(String 250)

(All persons)

- Q2** When you were last in contact with Child Maintenance Choices were you seeking information?
- 1 For yourself
 - 2 On behalf of someone else

(If Q2=1)

- Q3a** What is your status in this relationship?
- 1 Main day to day carer
 - 2 Parent without main care
 - 3 Parent with equal care (Parent with care/Receiving Parent)
 - 4 Parent with equal care (Non-Resident Parent/Paying Parent)
 - 5 Other

(If: Q3a=5)

- Q3ao** Please specify other
(String 250)

(If Q2=2)

- Q3b** What is your status in this relationship?
- 1 Family/friend
 - 2 Solicitor
 - 3 Voluntary / Community Sector Representative
 - 4 Health Professional
 - 5 Other

(If Q3b=5)

- Q3bo** Please specify other
(String 250)

Section B- Your contact with Choices staff

(All persons)

- Q4** When you **last** contacted Choices, what information did you require?
- 1 What are my choices around child maintenance?
 - 2 How is child maintenance calculated?
 - 3 When should I start arranging child maintenance?
 - 4 Does child maintenance affect my benefits?
 - 5 Can I get information on charging?
 - 6 Other

(If Q4=6)

- Q4o** Please specify other
(String 250)

(All persons)

- Q5a** Did the Choices staff member explain the options around child maintenance to you clearly? **PROMPT IF REQUIRED:** *There are three different types of arrangements that can be set up for child maintenance – a private arrangement, an arrangement through the Child Maintenance Service, and an arrangement through the courts.*
- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 3 Cannot remember

(If Q5a=2)

- Q5b** Please tell us why you felt the options around child maintenance were not explained to you clearly.
(String 250)

(All persons)

- Q6a** Did you feel the Choices staff member listened to you and understood your circumstances?
- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 3 Cannot remember

(If Q6a=2)

- Q6b** Please tell us why you felt the Choices staff member failed to listen to you and understand your circumstances.
(String 250)

(All persons)

- Q7** Did the Choices staff member inform you that receiving child maintenance does not affect social security benefits, housing benefits or tax credits?
- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 3 Cannot remember

(All persons)

Q8 Did the Choices staff member discuss other organisations that might have been able to provide further support to you?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Cannot remember

(If Q8=1)

Q9

Which organisations were discussed?

- 1 Family Mediation
- 2 Parents Advice
- 3 Parenting NI
- 4 Relate NI
- 5 Advice NI
- 6 Barnardos
- 7 Citizen's Advice Bureau
- 8 Gingerbread
- 9 Solicitor
- 10 Womens Aid
- 11 Social Security Agency
- 12 Advice for Debt NI
- 13 Other

(If Q9=13)

Q9o

Please specify other
(String 250)

(If Q9=1-13)

Q10

Did you find this useful?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

(If Q8=2)

Q11

Would it have helped if the Choices staff member had discussed other organisations that might have been able to provide further support to you?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

(If Q11=1)

Q12

What type of support would have helped?

- 1 Parenting
- 2 Relationship
- 3 Legal
- 4 Financial
- 5 Personal
- 6 Other

(If Q12 =6)

Q12o

Please specify other
(String 250)

(All persons)

- Q13** Did the Choices staff advise you about the online calculator?
- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 3 Cannot remember

Section C- Making arrangements through Choices

(If Q3a=1-4)

- Q14** When you last contacted Choices, how many children did you speak about in your conversation (by children, I mean aged under 16 or 16-19 and in full-time education)?
- 1 1
 - 2 2
 - 3 3
 - 4 4
 - 5 5 or more

(If Q3a=1-4)

- Q15** As a result of the information given by Child Maintenance Choices, what further action have you taken? (ie a family based arrangement)
- 1 I was able to make arrangements privately with my ex partner
 - 2 I applied to the Child Maintenance Service for a statutory arrangement.
 - 3 I made an arrangement through a solicitor/ the courts.
 - 4 I am still in the process of setting up an arrangement
 - 5 I have not been able to set up an arrangement
 - 6 I do not want to set up an arrangement
 - 7 Other

(If Q15=7)

- Q15o** Please specify other.
(String 250)

(If Q15=1,2,3,4)

- Q16** Did you find your contact with Choices helpful?
- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 3 Don't Know
 - 4 Cannot remember

(If Q16=1)

- Q17** How did your contact with Choices help?
- 1 It enabled me to talk to my ex partner about a family based arrangement
 - 2 It clarified my thinking in relation to the best child maintenance arrangement for my family
 - 3 It pointed me to other services which supported me in putting an effective child maintenance arrangement in place
 - 4 Other

(If Q17=4)

Q17o Please specify other.
(String 250)

(If Q15=1,2,3)

Q18 How satisfied are you with this child maintenance arrangement?

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Satisfied
- 3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 Dissatisfied
- 5 Very dissatisfied

(If Q15=4)

Q19 What type of arrangement are you in the process of setting up?

- 1 I am making arrangements privately with my ex partner
- 2 I am applying to the Child Maintenance Service for a statutory arrangement.
- 3 I am making an arrangement through a solicitor/ the courts.

Section D- Other information and services from Choices

Q20 In the 12 months since [*date one year ago*], have you used the Child Maintenance Choices website?

Yes	1	Go to Q21
No	2	Go to Q22

Q21 How much do you agree with the following statement?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
I found the information provided on the website useful	1	2	3	4	5	Go to Q23

Q22 Why didn't you use the CM Choices website?

I didn't know about it	1	Go to Q23
I have no internet access	2	
I had no need to	3	
Other	4	Go to Q22o

Q22o Please specify other

	Go to Q23
--	------------------

Section E- overall ratings and recommendations

Q23 When you contacted CMS choices how satisfied/dissatisfied were you with the following?

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	
<i>The quality of the information supplied to enable you to make an arrangement which suited you best *prompt* making a Family Based Arrangement/Direct Pay case/Non monetary agreement / Stautory case</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Go to Q24 if answer 4 or 5 else Go to Q25
<i>The ability of the call handler to deal with any additional queries you may have had</i>	1	2	3	4	5	
<i>The instructions provided by the call handler on how to progress your case (if applicable)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	
<i>Advice on other agencies which would offer help and support to set up Family Based Arrangements</i>	1	2	3	4	5	
<i>The overall level of service received from Child Maintenance Service Choices</i>	1	2	3	4	5	

Q24 If you were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with any of the above, why were you dissatisfied/very dissatisfied?

	Go to Q25
--	------------------

(All persons)

Q25 If someone you knew needed information about child maintenance would you recommend Child Maintenance Choices to them?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

(If Q25=2)

Q26

Why would you not recommend Choices?

- 1 I was not given the information I needed
- 2 The information I was given wasn't clear
- 3 Choices staff were not customer-friendly
- 4 Other

(If Q26=4)

Q26o

Please specify other
(String 250)

(All persons)

Q27

Is there anything else you would have wanted Child Maintenance Choices to do for you?

- 1 Provide a face-to face service
- 2 Make contact with other agencies/support organisations on my behalf
- 3 Help me complete appropriate documentation
- 4 Other way Choices could help.
- 5 No, content with the help/ advice I received.

(If Q27=4)

Q27o

Please specify other
(String 250)

Section F- equality information

(All persons)

The following questions are for Equality purposes. As was the case throughout the survey, the responses which you give to these questions, are completely confidential.

(All persons)

Q28

What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Refused

(All persons)

Q29

What age were you on your last birthday?

(All persons)

Q30

What is your current legal marital status?

- 1 Single, that is, never married and never registered in a same-sex civil partnership
- 2 Married
- 3 Separated, but still legally married
- 4 Divorced
- 5 Widowed
- 6 in a registered same-sex civil partnership
- 7 Separated, but still legally in a same-sex civil partnership
- 8 Formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved
- 9 Surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership
- 10 Refused

(All persons)

Q31

What is your ethnic group?

- 1 White
- 2 Irish Traveller

Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups

- 3 White and Black Caribbean
- 4 White and Black African
- 5 White and Asian
6. Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background, *please describe*

Asian / Asian British

- 7 Indian
- 8 Pakistani
- 9 Bangladeshi
- 10 Chinese
- 11 Any other Asian background, *please describe*

Black / African / Caribbean / Black British

- 12 African
- 13 Caribbean
- 14 Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, *please describe*

Other ethnic group

- 15 Arab
- 16 Any other ethnic group, *please describe*
- 17 *Refused*

(All persons)

Q32 What is your religion, even if you are not currently practising?

- 1 No religion
- 2 Catholic
- 3 Presbyterian
- 4 Church of Ireland
- 5 Methodist
- 6 Baptist
- 7 Free Presbyterian
- 8 Brethren
- 9 Protestant – Other, including not specified
- 10 Christian – Other, including not specified
- 11 Buddhist
- 12 Hindu
- 13 Jewish
- 14 Muslim
- 15 Sikh
- 16 Any other religion, *please describe*
- 17 Refused

(All persons)

ASK ALL

Q33 Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? By 'long-standing' I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of at least 12 months or that is likely to affect you over a period of at least 12 months.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know
- 4 Refused

(All persons)

Q34 Are there any adults who are living with you who are sick, disabled or elderly whom you look after or give special help to, for example a sick, disabled or elderly relative, wife, husband, partner or friend?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Refused

(All persons)

Q35 Which of these best describes how you think of yourself? (READ OUT)

- 1 Heterosexual / Straight
- 2 Gay / Lesbian
- 3 Bisexual
- 4 Other
- 5 *Spontaneous don't know/Refusal*

(All persons)

You have now reached the end of the survey. Thank you very much for your time. The information you have provided has been extremely helpful.

Appendix B: Background Quality Report

Child Maintenance Choices Survey 2016 Background Quality Report

Background

This report has been produced by the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) team within the Analytical Services Unit (ASU) of the Department for Communities (DfC). The role of the team is to undertake research and statistical analysis regarding CMS. The team comprises four statisticians, independent from CMS, employed by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) who have subsequently been out posted to DfC. The purpose of this survey was to gain feedback about the level of service provided by Child Maintenance Choices. Responses were collected from individuals who had differing roles. These were Parents with Care (PWCs), Non Resident Parents (NRPs), and those who were contacting Choices on behalf of someone else.

Individuals who had been in contact with CMS Choices from October 2015 to February 2016, and had agreed to be contacted at a later time, were contacted to participate in the survey. The name and telephone number associated with these individuals were provided to the survey team to enable them to contact them. These details were recorded by Choices at the time of the call.

Relevance

This data is of interest to anyone with an interest in child maintenance issues. Results produced using this data will be of primary interest to senior management within the Child Maintenance Service and those responsible for the administration of Child Maintenance Choices. The results would also be of interest to members of the public, the media, support groups, voluntary organisations and charities.

Accessibility and Clarity

This report is available online on the date of publication and can be accessed from the DfC website at the following link:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/other-dfc-research>

This report is issued by DfC ASU. If you have a question or require this document in another format, please contact us by email (asu@communities-ni.gov.uk) or phone (02890829255).

Relevant footnotes are included within each table, graph and chart within the report.

Accuracy

Individuals who had been in contact with CMS Choices from October 2015 to February 2016, and had agreed to be contacted at a later time, were contacted to participate in the survey. The potential respondents contacted Choices over a number of different months, which will help to reduce the seasonality effect that can potentially arise in survey data collection.

In any survey there is a possibility of data input error. This however was limited due to the methodology utilised for the survey fieldwork. The data was collected by the independent survey team recording responses onto Survey Monkey software. This meant that data was immediately recorded electronically. This subsequently fed directly into the database that was used for analysis. No manual data input was therefore required. The questionnaire was uploaded to this online resource by ASU, and the interviewers would ask each question to customers as they appeared on screen. This ensured that the respondents were asked the questions that applied to them, as determined by the filtering logic which was applied to questions on the website. At the conclusion of the fieldwork, ASU analysed any data entries that were determined by Survey Monkey to be “completed”.

At the analysis stage, a further check was applied to ensure that the filtering logic had worked correctly on the website. This was done by exporting the data from the site and importing it into SAS. The filters were then re-applied to the data using SAS.

Other quality assurance checks were also completed, for example checking for missing cells and ensuring that totals added up.

In any survey there is also a possibility of non-response bias. Non-response bias arises if the characteristics of non-respondents differ from those of respondents in such a way that they are reflected in the responses given in the survey.

Accurate estimates of non-response bias can be obtained by comparing characteristics of the achieved sample with the distribution of the same characteristics in the population at the time of sampling.

Timeliness

The fieldwork was spread out over a three week period. Contact numbers were forwarded to the independent survey team on the 17th May 2016. The fieldwork was carried out from the 23rd May 2016 until the 10th June 2016.

The survey team used Survey Monkey software to record the answers to the survey. The data was therefore immediately available to ASU. It was downloaded from the software and analysed via SAS to enable statistical analysis to be conducted. The report was published on the 23rd March 2017, 9 months after collection ceased.

Coherence and Comparability

The 2016 Choices survey questionnaire was a modified version of the questionnaire used in the last Choices survey (in 2012). The questions asked in the Choices survey were developed by ASU in conjunction with CMS. Like the 2012 survey, respondents were derived from a list of individuals who had recently contacted Choices and had agreed to be contacted again. There should therefore be comparability when it comes to some of the results recorded in the report, subject to a number of caveats.