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Child Maintenance Service

Annual Report on *Decision Making*

1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015



Department for
**Social
Development**
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Annual Report on Decision Making

in the

Child Maintenance Service

1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under Article 76 of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 by the Department for Social Development

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Introduction by *The Director of CMS*

I am pleased to present the Annual Report on the Standard of Decision Making in the Child Maintenance Service for 2014/15.

This report provides an overview on the standard of decision-making for clients whose applications are maintained on the 1993 and 2003 Statutory Child Maintenance Schemes for the year ending March 2015. The 1993 statutory scheme is maintained through the Child Support Computer System (CSCS) and the 2003 scheme is operated through the Child Support 2 (CS2) computer system.

In 2012 we introduced a new statutory scheme as part of our wide-ranging Child Maintenance Reform Programme. Our 1993 and 2003 (Legacy) schemes are now closed to new applications, however at the start of the 2014/15 reporting year, we still had approximately 26,000 cases on the Legacy systems to manage and maintain.

I am therefore pleased to be able to report that despite the need to commit time and resource into our new statutory scheme, we have not abandoned our Legacy work. Indeed far from it. In 2014/15, our people collected or arranged a record £27.4m that benefitted over 21,000 children across Northern Ireland. The vast majority of this was on Legacy schemes.

We also surpassed our accuracy target, achieving 98% accuracy across our Legacy schemes.

So it is not simply more money for more children, but the right money for the right children.

Not surprisingly our clients are now more satisfied than ever with our service and whilst we recognise there is always more we can do, it is also worth pausing at times to reflect on the progress to date and to recognise the contribution of our people in making this all happen.

As always I am indebted to colleagues in the Case Monitoring Team who work closely with the Standards Committee to independently check and monitor our work in this regard.

The support and challenge we get from the Standards Committee is vital in our journey of continuous improvement. We appreciate and value their role and in particular the external vision and professionalism Eileen, Laura and Kevin bring. My personal thanks to all 3 for the courteous, but thorough approach they bring to their work.



DAVID MALCOLM
Director, Child Maintenance Service

Foreword by The Chairperson of *The Standards Committee*

Introduction

The Joint Standards Committee for Northern Ireland was established in consequence of the reorganisation of adjudication and appeals provided for in the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order of 1998. The background to the creation of the Committee, and its terms of reference, are set out in Appendix 6 of this report. In brief, the Order placed responsibility for monitoring the standard of adjudication, where there is a right of appeal, on the Department. The duties involved were then delegated to the Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency (the Agency) and the Head of Division (now the Director) of the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) formerly known as the Child Support Agency.

These were major changes which provoked concerns relating to credibility and transparency. In response to these, the Westminster government gave assurances that arrangements would be put in place to build an independent element into the monitoring of decision making. In consequence, the Committee for Northern Ireland has an independent Chair and two independent members. In summary, the Committee has two main tasks. First, we are required to provide assurance to the Chief Executive of the Agency and the Director of CMS that effective procedures are in place to monitor the standard of decision making and to feed back the results of monitoring to secure continuous improvement. Secondly, we are required to have oversight of the standard of decision making, to identify weaknesses in performance and to make recommendations to address these.

The Committee discharges its responsibilities in a variety of ways. The quarterly reports produced by the Case Monitoring Team (CMT) within CMS, which is responsible for checking the standard of decision making, are closely examined by the full Committee at its quarterly meetings. Additionally, there is a programme of formal meetings with staff across the year with additional meetings as required. We also have discussions with, for example, the voluntary sector and Northern Ireland Audit Office to obtain additional observations on performance. Drawing on all of this experience, I am pleased to provide assurance that the arrangements in place to monitor the standard of decision making are robust and effective. I should note that this view is supported by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and would commend the staff of the CMT for the quality of their work and the contribution they make to what is an important service in our society. I can also confirm that, as page 11 of the report indicates, there is an on-going process of feedback to secure continuous improvement.

Decision making performance in 2014/15

Chapter 3 of the report sets out the methodology employed by the CMT to monitor performance. In essence, on the advice of statisticians, a number of cases are randomly selected and checked against three main elements. The first relates to the cash value accuracy of the most recent decision. In plainer English, the focus here is on the correctness of the most recent decision on the amounts Paying Parents are entitled to by way of maintenance. Getting this right is less straightforward than might be thought as CMS is managing three different schemes of varying complexity. The first of these (the old scheme) was introduced under the Child Support (NI) Order of 1991 (1993 scheme) and was of such complexity as to be a recipe for error. The new scheme, introduced under the Child Support Pensions and Social Security Act (NI) 2000 (2003 scheme), simplified the formula for the assessment of maintenance but much of the operational improvement anticipated was lost as a result of IT difficulties. Thus, for example, it was not possible to move cases from the old scheme on to the new scheme as had been intended. In 2012 a third scheme was developed (CMS 2012) and, as I note below, it is intended that all cases will be within this scheme by 2018. On the basis of all of this, the results of the checks made in 2014/15 are very creditable. Pages 14 and 17 of the report indicate that the cash value accuracy rate for the 1993 scheme was 99% and that for the 2003 scheme was 97%. This gives a balanced scorecard result, putting the two schemes together, of 98%. Decision makers in CMS have exceeded the target set by 1% and this is a very good result.

The second element in the checks by CMT relates to the quality of decision making. This is assessed by reference to four criteria which include the sufficiency of evidence to support the most recent decision and the correct application of the law. In previous forewords I have expressed various concerns with regard to the methodology deployed in relation to this aspect of the work of CMT. I am pleased to note that, after much discussion, these issues have been resolved. The focus is now on the correctness of core elements in the decision making process which change from quarter to quarter. I am confident this will contribute to continuous improvement and provide a clearer guide to the standard of work of CMS decision makers. Pages 14 and 17 of the report detail performance with regard to the quality of decision making in 2014/15. For both the new and old schemes the accuracy rate was 97% and this is a very satisfactory performance.

The third element in the assessment of performance relates to the collection service provided by CMS whereby decision makers set up accounts and payment schedules. The accounts are checked for accuracy where, in the cases sampled for maintenance calculation accuracy, the most recent decision results in a revision of liability. Pages 15 and 18 indicate that the accuracy rates with regard to operational accounts were 99.5% for the 2003 scheme and 100% for the 1993 scheme. Again, this is a very satisfactory performance.

Other issues

In addition to commending staff for these very positive outcomes, I would also wish to note other successful aspects of the work of CMS of which the Committee has been made aware across the year. First, there has been the general improvement in the service provided with a rising proportion of non-resident parents in the various schemes paying child maintenance. More money is being collected and more children are benefitting from this. Given the very difficult economic climate of the past few years, this is a considerable achievement. Secondly, this year saw the start of a process to transform child support in Northern Ireland. A central element in the new service is the provision of impartial advice to help separated parents make the most appropriate child maintenance arrangements. The advice given covers three main options: family based arrangements with no further CMS involvement, Direct Pay where CMS calculates the maintenance payment with couples agreeing privately on how this should be paid and access to the collection, payment and enforcement- service provided by CMS. It should be noted that parents can move, for example from option one to option three should this prove necessary. Work is now underway to close down the old and new schemes with parents being advised of their options as this is done. This is a major project and we have been impressed by the energy and commitment of the staff involved. The target for completion of the work is 2018. Three observations can be made at this point. First, there is the possibility that more children may gain as the service moves towards being a positive source of support available to all rather than a punitive strategy targeted on a minority. The Ministerial decision that application fees would not be introduced in Northern Ireland is a helpful element in building this new approach. Secondly, we remain concerned about the impact of the charges for use of the collection service which are levied on parents with care and non-resident parents under the new regime. Our discussions suggest

a number of things are happening here. Charges are not having the adverse effects on receiving parents that many feared and may be having a positive effect in incentivising paying parents to accept and discharge their responsibilities with less delay. There is, however, some concern in the voluntary sector that charges may be leaving paying- parents with insufficient incomes to meet other costs. We await the results of the research being conducted on all of this with interest. Thirdly, moving to a position where there is only one scheme (the 2012 scheme) to be administered will bring an end to the wasteful and, to many, incomprehensible arrangements which staff have struggled to manage for so many years. The way is now open for CMS to provide a service to the people of Northern Ireland from which others can learn.

Conclusion

I am pleased to be able to provide a positive report on the work and progress of CMS this year. I am grateful to all of the staff who have given us comprehensive presentations and dealt openly and honestly with our many questions. My thanks goes to all of my colleagues on the Committee for their contributions. I would particularly wish to acknowledge the expertise my fellow independent members, Kevin Higgins and Laura McPolin, bring to the Committee and the support provided by our secretary Clare Cull.



Professor Eileen Evason
Chairperson of Standards Committee

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides assurance to the Director of CMS that effective monitoring procedures are in place and that monitoring accurately reflects the standard of decision making within CMS.
- 1.2 The Balanced Scorecard target for the 2014/2015 monitoring year is to achieve a cash value accuracy level of 97% for the 1993 Child Support Scheme and 2003 Child Support Scheme combined. The target focuses upon the accuracy of the last decision and is decided by the examination of the pre-determined statistically valid sample of decisions. The measure last decision to be cash value accurate to the nearest pound.

BALANCED SCORECARD

- 1.3 The combined cash value accuracy figure achieved for this monitoring year was 98%.

| Balanced Scorecard Target | Percentage Accurate | Percentage Inaccurate |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 97% | 98% | 2% |

2. The Decision Making Process

- 2.1 Decision makers calculate the amount of maintenance based on the Child Support legislation – Child Support (NI) Order 1991 and Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act (NI) 2000. Decision makers are required to consider evidence provided by the parent with care and the non resident parent to establish the amount of maintenance required to maintain the qualifying children.
- 2.2 Decision makers are required to obtain and document sufficient evidence to support their decisions. It is essential that all avenues be explored to ensure that every aspect of the decision has been investigated. In the majority of cases this information is then processed by Child Support 2 (CS2) which is the computer system to support the 2003 child maintenance scheme or by the Child Support Computer System (CSCS) which is the computer system to support the 1993 child maintenance scheme. These systems are used to calculate maintenance assessments.
- 2.3 When an initial maintenance calculation or initial maintenance assessment has been made the decision maker can reconsider their decision by way of supersession to take into account a change of circumstance or a revision to correct an error.
- 2.4 Child Maintenance Service also provides a collection service in addition to the assessment service. The decision maker uses CS2 or CSCS to set up liability accounts and payment schedules. These schedules take into account the paying parent's current liability as well as any underpayment or overpayment as a result of the new assessment. Cases are monitored separately on the financial accuracy of this service and results are also reported, but these checks do not impact on the cash value accuracy of decision-making.
- 2.5 There are two main guides that decision makers refer to for both maintenance assessment and operational accounts decisions when working on CSCS. To help in the decision making process, decision makers follow the guidance in the Decision Makers Guide and for matters of procedure they refer to the Child Support Guides. Both of these guides are available on the Service's intranet site. Guidance for the 2003 Scheme is available through CS2 and on the intranet.

3. CS2 and CSCS Assurance

- 3.1 The number of cases randomly selected during the 2014/2015 monitoring year was 546 cases. Of these 312 were the 2003 Scheme and 234 from the 1993 Scheme. These figures are based on a formula drawn up by the Department's statisticians.
- 3.2 The monitoring quota is based upon a confidence level of 95% with a tolerance level of +/- 2.45%. This means that the actual cash value error rate could be up to 2.45% greater or less than the error rate found by the case monitors.
- 3.3 As a result of a Northern Ireland Audit Office requirement, the volume of CS2 checks in this financial year include 20 wholly clerical cases that are maintained by a clerical team in Bolton. These cases are checked by GB Client & Process Assurance team who then provide the NI Case Monitoring team with the assurance. These cases feed into the NI Child Maintenance Services cash value accuracy figures.
- 3.4 Analytical Services provide details of all cases which have been adjudicated on CS2 in a given month. From this CMT select a random sample using a random number generator program
- 3.5 CSCS cases monitored this year were selected from a scan of 100% of the decisions applied to all cases which was produced on a weekly basis. The same random selection process was then applied to this scan.
- 3.6 Using these scans provides a robust and independent assurance on the selection process.
- 3.7 The types of decisions selected for both schemes are decisions where maintenance assessments have been completed and decisions not to assess where the tolerance level was not broken. These are:
 - Initial maintenance assessments/calculations;
 - Supersessions;
 - Revisions;
 - Interim Maintenance Assessments (CSCS);
 - Default Maintenance Decisions (CS2);
 - Maintenance assessments with interim effective dates (CSCS);
 - Decision not to assess where the tolerance level was not broken;
 - Variations; and
 - Departures.
- 3.8 The same sample of decisions is also monitored from an operational accounts perspective, where the maintenance assessment requires operational accounts action. However decisions on operational accounts do not feed into the cash value accuracy target as these are part of the collection process.

3.9 Decisions are monitored against 3 main criteria:

- Last decision cash value accuracy to provide independent assurance that decisions made are accurate in line with the requirements in Child Maintenance Service (CMS) Balanced Scorecard;
- Operational accounts accuracy to ensure accounts reflect the current liability; and
- Assurance on the quality of the decision making process.

3.10 The findings of the Case Monitoring Team also form the basis of monthly reports to the Divisional Management Team and operational managers. These reports detail performance against the Balanced Scorecard target, providing an analysis of results and identifying any trends and issues.

4. Monitoring Findings for 2003 Scheme

4.1 The Case Monitoring Team's findings for CS2 maintenance calculations and operational accounts are presented in this part of the report.

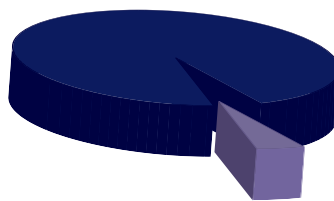
CS2 Maintenance Calculation

Cash Value Accuracy

4.2 Between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015, there were 312 Maintenance Calculation decisions checked. There were 302 decisions found to be cash value accurate (97%) and 10 were cash value inaccurate (3%). The main errors affecting cash value accuracy were the incorrect imposition of Default Maintenance Decisions used when a paying parent does not co-operate with CMS and the calculation of income.

- **Appendix 1;** Shows an analysis of decision making errors in the decision making process that did not necessarily impact on the cash value accuracy of the Outcome Maintenance Calculation Decision.

Accurate 97%



Inaccurate 3%

Decision Making Accuracy

4.3 The same sample of 312 Maintenance Calculation decisions were also monitored for decision making accuracy. Where a case is found to have decision making errors, it does not necessarily impact on the cash value accuracy of the outcome decision. This reporting year it was decided in conjunction with the Standards Committee to streamline the Decision Making process and focus on a specific area each quarter (see Appendix 1). CMT monitors raise decision making comments in the following categories.

- There is insufficient evidence to support the decision;
- The incorrect law is applied, or the law is applied incorrectly;
- The decision maker makes a wrong finding of fact;
- There is an incorrect calculation; and
- The record of decision/notification is incomplete or inaccurate.

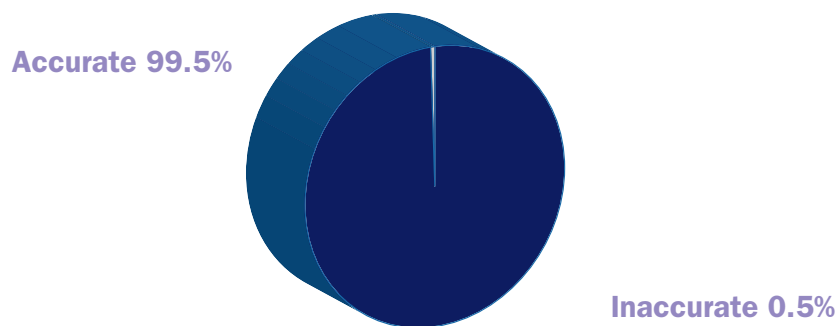
Of the 312 decisions monitored, 303 were found to be decision making accurate (97%) and 9 were found to have decision making errors (3%). The main errors were regarding imposition of Default Maintenance Decisions and income.

CS2 Operational Accounts

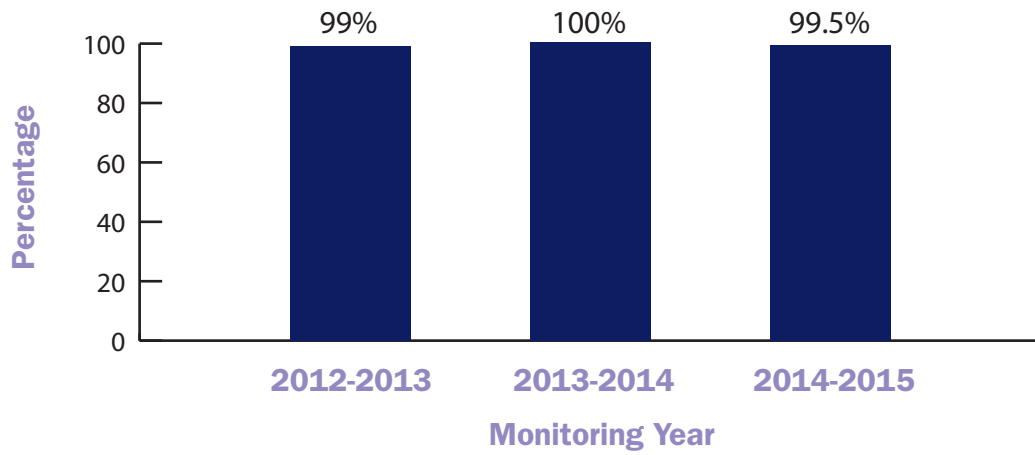
- 4.4 Although not used to measure the Balanced Scorecard accuracy target, the Case Monitoring Team also examines operational accounts accuracy as this provides assurance on the financial accuracy of the collection service provided by CMS.
- 4.5 The decision maker uses CS2 or CSCS to set up accounts and payment schedules. These schedules take into account the paying parent's current liability as well as any underpayment or overpayment as a result of the new assessment.
- 4.6 Decisions selected for monitoring of Maintenance Calculation decisions also have their operational accounts monitored. However where the Maintenance Calculation decision does not result in a new or revised liability there is no requirement to monitor operational accounts. Consequently the number of operational accounts decisions monitored is less than the number of Maintenance Calculation decisions monitored.

Financial Accuracy

- 4.7 From 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 the Case Monitoring Team monitored 220 operational accounts decisions. Of these, 219 were found to be financially accurate (99.5%).



Comparison of Operational Accounts Cash Value Accuracy 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2015

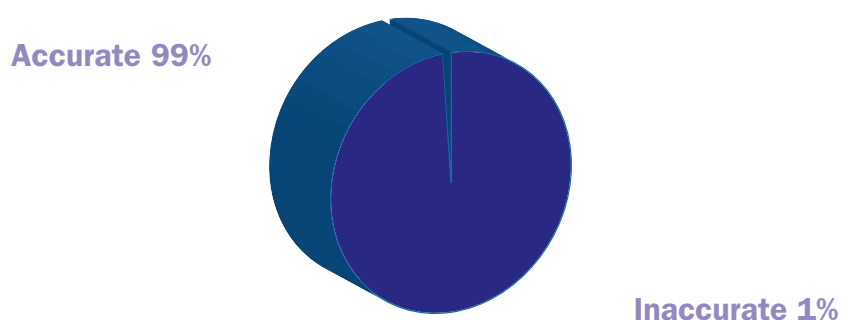


5. Monitoring Findings for 1993 Scheme

5.1 The Case Monitoring Team's findings for CSCS Maintenance Assessments and operational accounts are presented in this part of the report.

Cash Value Accuracy

5.2 Between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015 the Case Monitoring Team monitored 234 Maintenance Assessment decisions. The monitors found that 233 were cash value accurate (99%) and 1 was cash value inaccurate (1%). The error affecting cash value accuracy was incorrect housing costs. An analysis of Maintenance Assessment errors is found in Appendix 3. Appendix 4 shows a comparison of cash value accuracy for the last 3 years.



Decision Making Accuracy

5.3 The same sample of 234 Maintenance Assessment decisions was also monitored for decision making accuracy. Where a case is found to have inaccurate decision making, it does not necessarily follow that the last decision is cash value inaccurate. This reporting year it was decided in conjunction with the Standards Committee to streamline the Decision Making process and focus on a specific area each quarter (see Appendix 3). The case monitors raise a decision making comment under the following categories:

- There is insufficient evidence to support the decision;
- The incorrect law is applied, or the law is applied incorrectly;
- The decision maker makes a wrong finding of fact;
- There is an incorrect calculation; and
- The record of decision/notification is incomplete or inaccurate.

5.4 Of the 234 decisions monitored, 227 were found to be decision making accurate (97%) and 7 were found to have decision making errors (3%). The main errors were regarding calculation of income.

- Appendix 3 provides an analysis of all decision making comments.

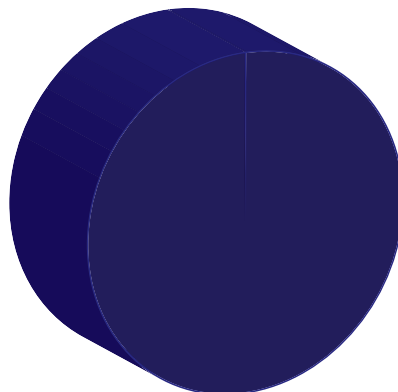
Operational Accounts

- 5.5 Although not used to measure the Balanced Scorecard target, the Case Monitoring Team also examines operational accounts performance.
- 5.6 Decisions selected to monitor Maintenance Assessment decisions also have their operational accounts monitored. However, where the Maintenance Assessment decision does not result in a new or revised liability, it is not necessary to monitor operational accounts. Consequently, the number of operational accounts decisions monitored is less than the number of Maintenance Assessment decisions monitored.

Financial Accuracy

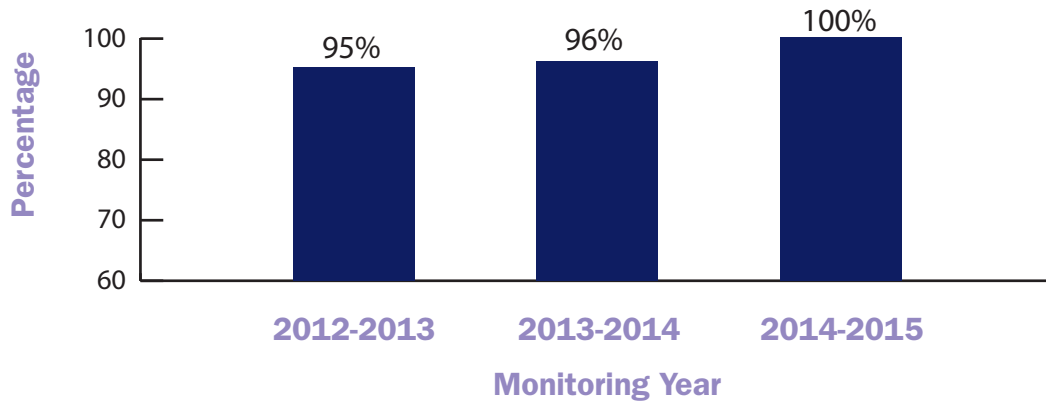
- 5.7 From 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 the Case Monitoring Team monitored 113 operational accounts decisions. Of these, all 113 were found to be financially accurate giving an accuracy performance of 100%.

Accurate 100%



Inaccurate 0%

Comparison Of Operational Accounts Cash Value Accuracy 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015



Appendix 1

2003 Scheme

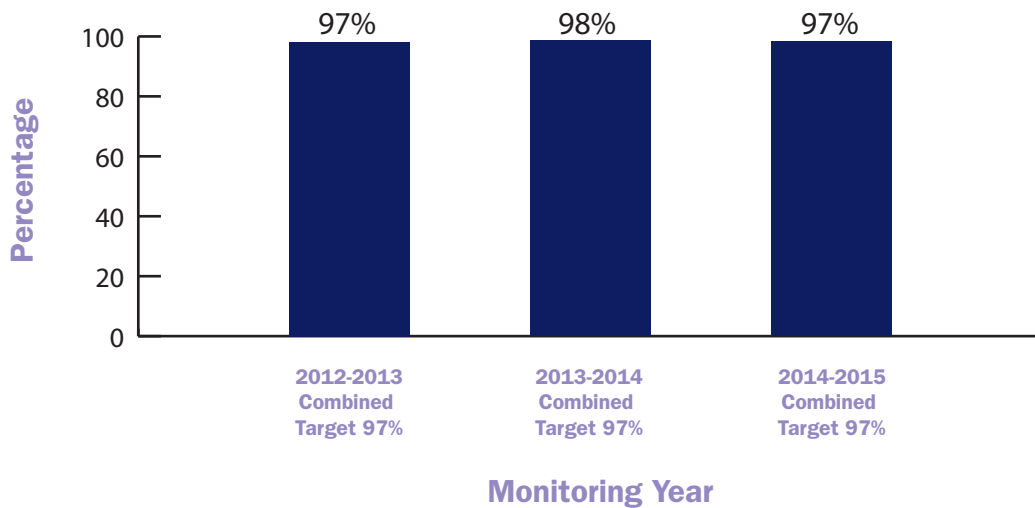
This table records the type of errors found in the decision making process

| Maintenance Calculation Comments 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|------------------------|---|----------|
| | A | B | C | D | E | TOTAL |
| | INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE ON WHICH TO DECIDE | INCORRECT LAW APPLIED/ LAW APPLIED INCORRECTLY | WRONG FINDING OF FACT / INCORRECT INTERPRETATION OF FACT | INCORRECTLY CALCULATED | RECORD OF DECISION / NOTIFICATION IS INCOMPLETE OR INACCURATE | |
| Effective Date and Relevant week | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Income – Relevant Week | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Earnings –Allowance/Deduction and Bonus | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Benefit Income | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 9 |

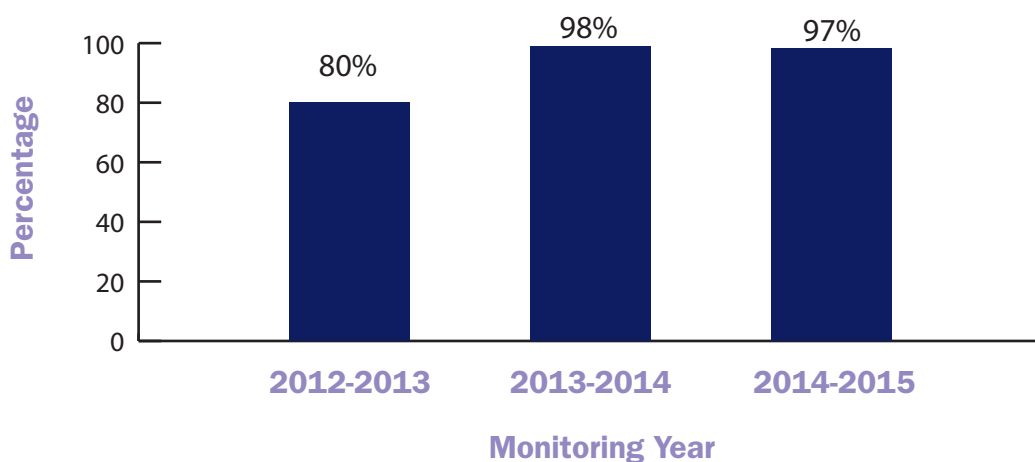
Appendix 2

2003 Scheme

Maintenance Calculation Cash Value Accuracy 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2015



Maintenance Calculation Decision Making Accuracy 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2015



Appendix 3

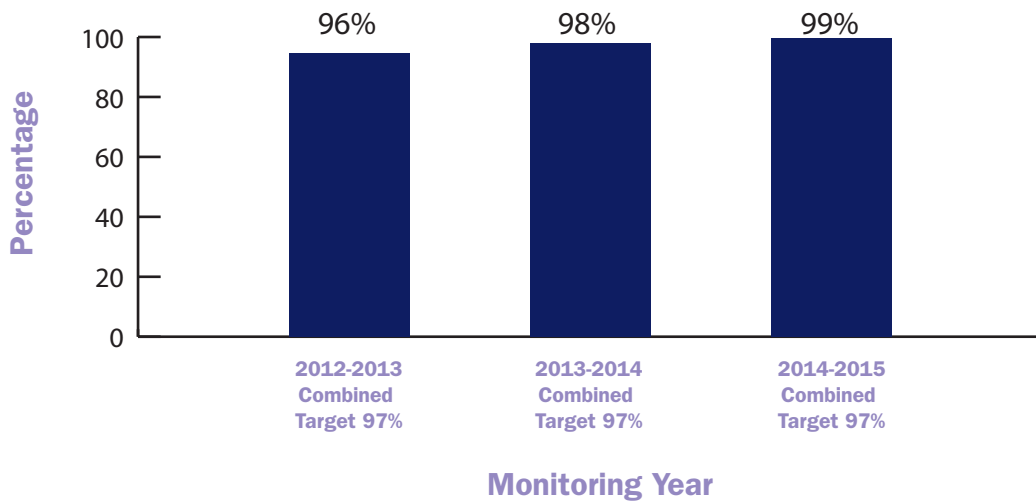
1993 Scheme

This table records the type of errors found in the decision making process

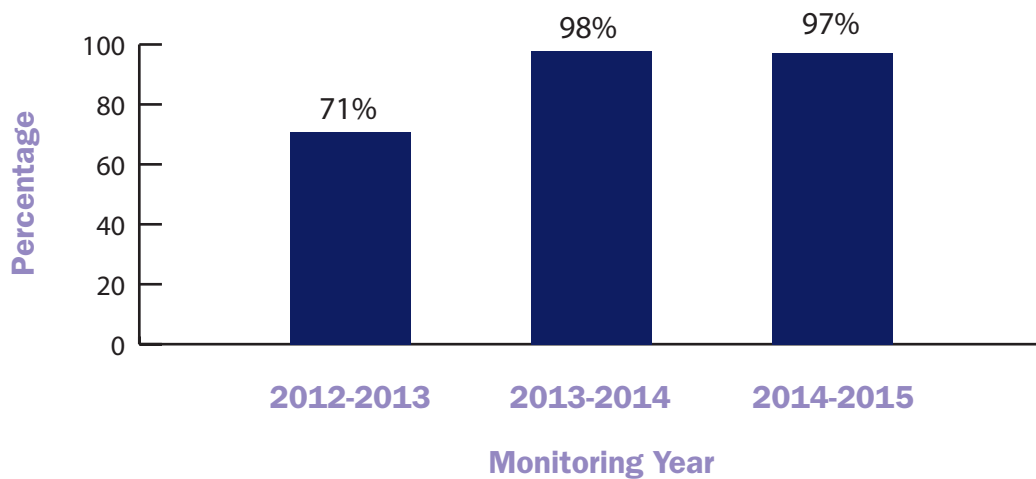
| Maintenance Assessment Comments 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|------------------------|---|----------|
| | A | B | C | D | E | TOTAL |
| | Insufficient evidence on which to decide | Incorrect law applied/ law applied incorrectly | Wrong finding of fact / incorrect interpretation Of fact | Incorrectly calculated | Record of decision / notification is incomplete or inaccurate | |
| Effective Date and Relevant week | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Income – Relevant Week | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Earnings –Allowance/Deduction and Bonus | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Benefit Income | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 9 |

Appendix 4 1993 Scheme

Maintenance Assessment Cash Value Accuracy 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2015



Maintenance Assessment Decision Making Accuracy 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2015



Appendix 5

The Process of Decision Making

As part of the decision making process there are different steps which the individual decision maker must consider.

Errors in following the Decision-Making process results in a decision making comment being included but do not necessarily impact on the outcome decision.

Comments include:-

- Identifying that an assessment needs to be considered
- Calculating the effective date of the assessment
- Gathering the evidence
- Clarifying the evidence
- Deciding which evidence to use
- Recording the evidence onto the computer system
- Adjudicating

Elements taken into account when calculating a Maintenance Calculation/Assessment

- Effective date of liability
- Household Members
- Earnings – Employed, Self Employed
- Other Income – Occupational or Personal Pensions, Tax Credits
- Benefit Income
- Shared Care of the qualifying child(ren)
- Other children in household
- Other Child Maintenance Agreements
- Other Financial Responsibilities
- Housing Costs, Travel to Work Costs (1993 scheme only), etc

Appendix 6

Terms of Reference for The Standards Committee

1. The Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 removed the distinction between adjudication decisions made by adjudication officers and departmental decisions and introduced single status decision-makers. This removed the statutory requirement for a Chief Adjudication Officer and by default, his responsibility for reporting on the standard of adjudication.
2. In addition to being responsible for the delivery of the decision-making process and the standard of decisions made, the Department was made responsible for reporting on the standard of decisions against which there is a right of appeal. These responsibilities have been delegated to the Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency and the Director of the Child Maintenance Service.
3. The responsibility requires the Chief Executive and the Director of CMS to have monitoring programmes in place to determine the standards that are to be reported. It has been recognised however, that to enhance this programme and its credibility and transparency with the public, some independent oversight of the arrangements is necessary. Accordingly a joint Standards Committee has been appointed with an independent chairperson and having terms of reference agreed by the Chief Executive and the Director of CMS.
4. The Committee acts in an advisory capacity only and has no executive powers. Its objectives are to:
 - Provide assurance to the Chief Executive and the Director of CMS that effective decision-making monitoring procedures are in place, to confirm legislation is properly applied and to monitor and report performance;
 - Identify common trends relating to the quality of the decision-making and to highlight those areas where improvement is needed;
 - Make specific recommendations on any area considered appropriate, including accuracy;
 - Provide assurance to the Chief Executive and the Director of CMS that mechanisms are in place to feed back monitoring results to enable continuous improvement;
 - Report to the Chief Executive and the Director of CMS on how the decision-making process is operating and where necessary to make recommendations for changes to it;
 - Report on the effectiveness of action taken by the Agency and the Service to achieve improvements; and
 - Provide the Chief Executive and the Director of CMS with an annual assurance in the form of a report on the quality of decision-making in the Agency and the Service and such other reports as the Chief Executive and the Director of CMS or the Standards Committee consider appropriate.
5. Standards Committee meetings are held 4 times yearly to coincide with the monitoring programmes and minutes are taken and agreed by the Committee members.
6. An agenda is prepared in advance of each meeting and circulated to Committee members for consideration.
7. The annual report is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under Article 76 of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

Committee Membership

| | |
|---|---|
| Chair Eileen Evason (CBE) | Emeritus Professor in Social Administration, University of Ulster |
| Independent Member Kevin Higgins | Advice NI |
| Independent Member Laura McPolin | Barrister, Civil and Family Law |
| John McKervill | Director of Pensions, Disability and Corporate Services, Social Security Agency |
| Conrad McConnell | Assistant Director Benefits Security, Social Security Agency |
| David Malcolm | Director, Child Maintenance Service |
| Eileen Donnelly | Case Monitoring Team, Child Maintenance Service |
| Lacey Walker | Head of Audit, Department for Social Development |

Appendix 7

Glossary

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Contribution To Maintenance | Non-resident parents in receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance are not liable to pay assessed maintenance but should have an amount equal to the minimum amount deducted from their benefit as a contribution to maintenance. |
| Decision Maker | The officer making decisions on behalf of the Department. |
| Decision Making | The process of applying the child support legislation and guidance to evidence supplied by clients. |
| Decision Not To Assess | When a change is notified but cannot be completed because; - information has not been forthcoming; tolerance has not been broken; request is outside the formula; nature of dispute is not known or no error was found. |
| Default Maintenance Decision | A Default Maintenance Decision is made, in 2003 Scheme cases, when the non-resident parent has not provided sufficient information for a Maintenance Calculation to be made and the missing information cannot be obtained from elsewhere. |
| Departure | Where a parent has exceptional circumstances not covered by the basic procedures of the 1993 Scheme. |
| Maintenance Assessment | A Maintenance Assessment calculated on the Child Support Computer System. |
| Initial Maintenance Assessment | The first assessment completed after receipt of a Maintenance Application Form and a Maintenance Enquiry Form, in 1993 Scheme cases. |
| Insufficient Evidence | When a decision is made without gathering all the evidence required to make a comprehensive decision. |
| Interim Effective Date | The effective date used to replace an Interim Maintenance Assessment when information cannot be traced back to the original effective date. |
| Interim Maintenance Assessment | An Interim Maintenance Assessment is imposed in 1993 Scheme cases when the non-resident parent either does not provide, or is unable to provide, information. |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Last Decision | The last assessment completed on the case selected for checking, taken from a random sample. |
| Maintenance Assessment | Liability calculated under the 1993 Scheme. |
| Maintenance Calculation | Liability calculated under the 2003 Scheme. |
| Minimum Amount | Payment at a set rate required from a non-resident parent if the amount of maintenance payable is assessed as nil or less than the prescribed minimum payment, in 1993 Scheme cases. |
| 2003 Scheme | Legislation effective from 3 March 2003 to calculate a non-resident parent's liability for child maintenance. |
| Non-Resident Parent | A parent who has a liability to maintain a parent with care's child(ren) but who lives apart from the parent with care. |
| 1993 Scheme | Legislation effective from 5 April 1993 to calculate a non-resident parents' liability for child maintenance. |
| Parent With Care | A parent who has care of the qualifying child(ren). |
| Revision | A decision is revised where it is changed from the date of the original decision as a consequence of action or application arising within the acceptable period of revision. |
| Supersession | A decision is superseded where there is a relevant change of circumstances changing the original decision from a later date. |
| Variation | Where a parent has exceptional circumstances not covered by the basic procedures of the 2003 Scheme. |

Appendix 8

NI Child Maintenance Service Good News

Total money Collected for children in the 2014/2015 financial year

- **£27.4M** collected and arranged compared to £27.2M in the previous year

Child Maintenance Services (CMS) have the power to deduct money direct from bank accounts that have been frozen when the paying parent does not pay. This can be by regular deductions or by taking a lump sum from the relevant bank account. These are known as Deduction Orders.

- NI CMS secured **£140,290** through 136 Deduction Orders
- In another deduction order case, the action prompted the Non Paying Parent to make a card payment of £8074.

The monies collected were all arrears that were due from Non Paying Parents and paid directly to arrears accounts.

For illustration purposes, the breakdown between lump sum deductions and regular deduction orders and examples of the success of these enforcement powers are as follows;

EXAMPLE

The NI Deduction Order Team secured a payment by Lump Sum Deduction Order (**LSDO**) of **£36,240**, all of which was due to the receiving parent. The receiving parent now is paid by the paying parent through direct maintenance payments that they have agreed to.

CMS also collect payments by Debit and Credit Card payment particularly when there are arrears owed.

For illustration purposes, the following are the breakdown between Debit Card payments and Credit Card payments and examples of the success of collection by this method;

There were Debit Card payments totalling **£325,214**

There were Credit Card payments totalling **£62,386**

The vast majority of payments were made by Debit Card.

EXAMPLE 1A member of staff in the NI Legal Enforcement team negotiated a card payment of £5,656.21

EXAMPLE 2 A member of staff, from the NI Client Service team received a payment of £3410.45 by card payment. This cleared the outstanding arrears on the case.



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