

Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission Board

Summary Minutes of the Commission Board Meeting 24 March 2009

Members:

Janet Paraskeva – Chair
Deborah Absalom
Rosemary Carter
Stephen Geraghty
Bill Griffiths
Alan Hardy
Heather Jackson
Susan Park
Maeve Sherlock
Keith Woodhouse

Also attending

Bill Hearn (Items 5, 6, 7)
Jeremy Kempton (Item 8)

Paul Wright - Commission Lawyer
Brenda White - Board Secretariat

Apologies:

None

1 Minutes and Matters Arising from 24 February meeting and 27 February extraordinary meeting

1.1 Minutes

1.1.1 Subject to amendments taken to paragraphs 1.2, 2.4, 2.7, 3.2, 4.1.3, 8.4, 9.4 and 10.1 the minutes of the 24 February meeting were agreed as a full and accurate record.

1.2 There were no matters arising.

2 The Commissioner's Report

The report provided a detailed summary of progress and developments in key areas of the Commission since the Board last received an update on 20 January. Key points for the Board to note were highlighted as:

Welfare Reform - the White Paper

2.1 The Child Maintenance powers in the Welfare Reform Bill were debated by the Public Bill Committee in the House of Commons on Tuesday 3 March.

2.2 Only the Opposition amendment concerning the court's ability to impose costs against the non-resident parent where he or she makes a

successful appeal, resulted in any substantial debate and the Minister (Kitty Ussher) had set out the rationale for the provision.

Establishing the Commission – Recruitment and Organisation Update

Recruitment

- 2.3 A Customer and Commissioning Director has been appointed subject to final approval by the Secretary of State and will take up post early June 2009.
- 2.4 Applications for the next set of advertised roles span a good mix of public and private sector applicants reflecting the current labour market and the availability of suitable candidates.
- 2.5 The recruitment agency tender exercise for the third phase of recruitment is nearing completion with three companies short-listed each having presented their proposals to the Commission on 10 March. All have confirmed that they are in a position to progress the requirement quickly. A final decision will be made soon.
- 2.6 The Commission expects to have completed recruitment for the Commission Executive by September 2009.

Induction of New Colleagues

- 2.7 A detailed Induction Programme is ready and is providing a fresh cultural start for all new recruits. It includes a presentation from one of the Commission's stakeholder organisations to help participants understand the client groups and the issues they face.
- 2.8 Feedback from the first event is good but there is a lot to take in, in just two days. Currently, the small number of new starters has meant that tailoring the event has not been possible, but work is underway to refine the programme so that it is appropriately targeted for the future audience.

Financial Management

- 2.9 The Commissioner provided a schedule of the financial position against budget and forecast for the full year.
- 2.10 The Commission remains on budget.

Commission Businesses

Child Maintenance Options

Rapid Survey

- 2.11 An in-house rapid survey to assess outcomes has been commissioned. The survey will provide some useful initial findings that look at the extent to which parents who have used the Child Maintenance Options service have made child maintenance arrangements and how many children have benefited.
- 2.12 Information will be particularly helpful to understand how many children are benefiting from maintenance in general and via private arrangements in particular.

Audit

- 2.13 The Terms of Reference for the follow-up audit of Child Maintenance Options have been agreed.
- 2.14 The Commission has appointed a Head of Governance, Risk Management and Assurance who is also the Commission's Internal Audit Manager.

CSA

- 2.15 Performance improved in March.

Future Scheme IT approach update

- 2.16 All suppliers have been informed whether they were successful or not. Formal feedback sessions with unsuccessful companies have been scheduled.

3 Corporate Plan

- 3.1 The Board agreed to publish the 1 year business plan and 3 year corporate plan as soon as possible. The foreword will explain the context of future funding i.e. reliant on the next spending review.

4 Future Scheme Policy – Changes of Circumstance

- 4.1 The majority of changes have already been determined by Ministers during the passage of the Bill and these will be actioned in-year. These changes are:
- 4.1.1 where a non-resident parent moves onto or off benefit;
 - 4.1.2 where a non-resident parent's income is more than 25% different to the historic figure used in the maintenance calculation;
 - 4.1.3 where a qualifying child dies.
- 4.2 The Board considered what other changes of circumstance would be acted on by the Commission as they are notified.

5 Transition Strategy

- 5.1 The approach to Transition included is how the Commission will end the liability to pay statutory maintenance under the two current schemes and support clients in making private arrangements or applications to the future scheme.
- 5.2 The Child Maintenance White paper set out some principles for the transition. These are to:
- 5.2.1 ensure that the transition to the new regime is driven by child poverty considerations focusing on support for the poorest families first;
 - 5.2.2 meet parents' needs by empowering them to make informed choices and fulfil their responsibilities;
 - 5.2.3 minimise disruption for parents through clear and effective communication and provide a seamless service for the move to the new regime;
 - 5.2.4 ensure the approach is practical and achievable – learning from past experience by reducing complexity that stalled the implementation of previous reforms.
- 5.3 In affirmative regulations, the Commission will be required to provide details of the order in which clients are to be moved to new arrangements and the timing and mechanics of the application process.
- 5.4 A planned approach to transition is planned between 2011 and 2014.

6 Commissioning Approach

- 6.1 The Board discussed the approach to working with outsourced delivery partners. In particular, they considered the various elements of activity required for delivery of the future scheme.
- 6.2 The Commission's publicly stated position is that it will create a market that will test the effectiveness of both outsourced and in house delivery without being pre-disposed to either.
- 6.3 No decisions have yet been made and the Board will discuss again at a future meeting.

7 Research and Evaluation

- 7.1 The agreed definition of an effective maintenance arrangement against which the Commission needs to measure is:
- 7.1.1 An effective private maintenance arrangement exists where both parents have agreed the form of the arrangement and are complying with it;

7.1.2 An effective statutory maintenance arrangement exists where the calculation under the scheme rules has produced an amount payable and this amount is being paid consistently.

7.2 In order to be able to measure effective arrangements it is necessary for the Commission to scope the data sources required to produce a baseline.

7.3 Board members heard a summary statement taking account of how any research and survey activity would be commissioned and how the independence of that work would be assured.

8 Campaign Activity – Child Maintenance Options

8.1 The Board heard that following a tendering exercise, Abbot Mead Vickers (AMV) have been appointed to take forward campaign activity.

8.2 In addition to the core audience of separated and separating parents is the group of people who influence those in the core audience - broadly speaking, the friends and families.

8.3 Research was conducted with groups representative of the target audience and confirmed that there was a demand for child maintenance information and support and activity will take account of feedback provided.

8.4 A regional pilot will take place before any national roll-out.

9 Future Scheme Timeline

9.1 The Board considered the updated timeline showing key milestones and decision points. All activity is on track.

9.2 The contract for a Systems Integrator is expected to be signed at the end of March.

10 Any Other Business

10.1 The next Board meeting of the Board will be on 21 April.