

## Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission Board

### Minutes of the Commission Board Meeting with Stakeholders on 20 October 2009

#### Members:

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

Paul Wright - Commission Lawyer  
Maria Jobson - Board Secretariat

#### Apologies:

Keith Woodhouse  
Lizzie Irons - Citizen Advice

#### Also attending

Janet Wojtkow – Director of Options  
Angela MacDonald - Head of Future Scheme Products and Services  
Sarah Caulkin - Relate  
Karen Woodall - Centre for Separated Families  
Nick Woodall - Centre for Separated Families  
Benjamin Carter - Resolution  
Alex Borchardt - Families need Fathers  
Fiona Weir - Gingerbread

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed stakeholders to the Board Meeting and thanked them for their previous involvement in helping the Commission to develop our Child Maintenance Options Service as well as the input provided to support the development of the Commission's vision.

#### 2. Child Maintenance Options

Janet Wojtkow

- 2.1 The meeting was updated with the three long term aims to establish the Child Maintenance Options Service:
- the **expert** on child maintenance issues (whether delivered by the Commission or its partners);
  - the **primary gateway** for maintenance arrangements, whether private or statutory;

- the way we understand and manage the **customer journey** – particularly through transition.
- 2.2 The current service, proposals on how the service can be developed and achieving our long term aims were then discussed. Discussion and feedback was sought on:
- 2.2.1 Encouraging use: how we reach and engage with our audience?
  - 2.2.2 Expanding our services: how we develop the service?
  - 2.2.3 Maximising our engagement channels: how do we enhance the ways customers interact with us?
  - 2.2.4 Preparing for the future: how we prepare for the future...and transition?
  - 2.2.5 Measuring success: how do we evaluate the success of the service?
- 2.3 Providing advice to clients as well as guidance was raised by stakeholders. It was explained that as our call handlers are not “experts” in all of the elements of information sought by clients, for example on housing, then it would be inappropriate to suggest we could advice and would always signpost to the ‘expert domain’.as appropriate.
- 2.4 Some social research has been commissioned to understand what customers think of the service – with a final report due next summer. Other survey work was discussed - including recent mystery shopping findings.
- 2.5 A wide range of customer channels including texting and web chats were discussed as ways of encouraging use and maximising engagement with clients. The Board acknowledged that using a range of channels was very important. Relate offered to share their experience of some of the newer channels with Child Maintenance Options.
- 2.6 Our work with other government departments was discussed.

### **3. Child Maintenance Options: Promoting Options      Stephen Leonard**

- 3.1 The meeting was updated on progress achieved since the 7<sup>th</sup> May meeting and proposed next steps.
- 3.2 A ‘test’ media campaign was launched in the Central ITV Region at the start of July and ran until the end of September. The primary objective was to drive awareness and usage of the Child Maintenance Options service among the total population as well as our client group using a mix of media including TV, radio, online and in the press, supported by door-drops.
- 3.3 In the campaign period the Child Maintenance Options Service received record levels of inbound calls and unique visitors to the website, with a 56% increase in calls and 103% increase in website visits. The meeting discussed the response profile:
- 3.3.1 Gender – 71% Female / 29% Male
  - 3.3.2 Role – 65% PWC / 22% NRP / 13% Other family

- 3.3.3 Information Requested (Top 6) - Getting started 49%, Private agreement 21%, Legal rights 8%, Emotional well being 7%, Money and finance 7% and Housing rights 7%
- 3.4 The next steps were outlined with the potential for a national campaign in the New Year. The low requirement for the face to face service was discussed along with some work to review why.

#### **4. Future Scheme – Designing the client journey Angela MacDonald**

- 4.1 The meeting was taken through the proposed client journey for the future scheme along with the associated rationale. In defining the client journey the Commission has utilised a wide range of expertise including findings from DWP client insight (2007/2008) studies as well as commissioning fresh research using focus groups of existing and potential clients.
- 4.2 First contact with a Non Resident Parent – The initial contact will focus on explaining the arrangement and addressing behavioural/attitudinal issues and proactively signposting to appropriate services where we believe that this will improve compliance and not delay the process.
- 4.3 The proposed information that the Commission currently plans to use for the future statutory scheme calculation may include:
  - 4.3.1 Gross income from HMRC for the latest available tax year as a basis for calculating the maintenance liability.
  - 4.3.2 The ability to take account of changes in circumstances where current income differs materially from the latest available data from HMRC.
  - 4.3.3 Re-assessment of maintenance liability on an annual basis, with data being sourced again from HMRC. This means that assessments are regularly updated to keep pace with changing circumstances.
- 4.4 Non-resident parents could be offered the choice of paying by voluntary Deduction of Earnings if employed or by direct debit. It is planned that both the parent with care and the non-resident parent will have a schedule detailing the dates of payment and amounts expected.
- 4.5 Management of arrears and change of circumstances were discussed, including the potential for change in validation for changes in circumstances.
- 4.6 An online service is planned to be available for clients.
- 4.7 Telephone services will remain available and stakeholders thought that the current opening times remained appropriate.
- 4.8 The next steps were discussed including testing some of the new approach; continuing to engage with clients, employers and wider stakeholder groups as the development of the future statutory scheme takes shape.

## **5. Close**

- 5.1 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their contributions to the discussion and looked forward to maintaining strong links with stakeholders.