

## **Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission Board**

### **Summary Minutes of the Commission Board Meeting 24 November 2009**

#### **Members:**

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

Paul Wright - Commission Lawyer  
Maria Jobson - Board Secretariat

#### **Apologies:**

None

#### **Also attending:**

Amanda Rowlatt - Director of Child Poverty and Analysis Directorate - DWP  
Charlotte Clark - Head of the Child Poverty Unit - DFES  
Clive Beard - Head of the Child Maintenance Sponsorship Team - DWP  
Paul Lehmann - Head of Corporate Communications & External Relationships

## **1. Minutes and Matters Arising from 20 October meeting**

### **1.1 Minutes**

1.1.1 Subject to amendments the minutes of the 20 October meeting were agreed.

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 October. Key points for the Board to note were highlighted as:

### **Child Benefit and definition of a Qualifying Child**

2.1 The Board were updated on the issue. Ministers agreed to introduce amending regulations with effect from 10 November 2009. Stakeholder interest groups have been informed and an article has been placed on the CSA website highlighting the issue and what action is being taken to resolve it. A dedicated telephone number has been set up to deal with any enquiries.

## **Welfare Reform Bill (Act)**

- 2.2 The Bill has now completed its Parliamentary passage and was granted Royal Assent on Thursday 12 November. The Act, includes the power to pilot the administrative removal of travel authorisation alongside the power to pilot the administrative removal of driving licenses.

## **The Work and Pensions Select Committee**

- 2.3 The Chair and Commissioner will be appearing in front of the Work and Pensions Select Committee on the 2 December. The Commission has submitted a memorandum outlining its structure, functions and progress to date. This document was distributed to members at the meeting. The National Audit Office (NAO) is preparing a background report for the Select Committee to support their questioning.

## **Proposal to Establish a Baseline of Child Maintenance Arrangements**

- 2.4 The Commission hopes that by the end of spring next year it will have established the baseline against which to measure the Commission's performance in meeting its statutory objective, to increase the number of effective arrangements. This will be supported by a large scale survey of the population of 'separated families'.
- 2.5 After a procurement process, the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) has been appointed to undertake the Wider Child Maintenance Survey following the Office of National Statistics' scoping study.

## **Commission Businesses**

### **Child Maintenance Options**

- 2.6 Following on from our stakeholder engagement event last month, at the request of Relate, we have arranged a visit to the Relate National Contact Centre to exchange learning and explore opportunities to work together. Later this month, we are also visiting Relate in Leeds, in their capacity as one of the successful organisations involved in the Department for Children, Schools and Families' relationship pilots on separating families.
- 2.7 The 2010 national advertising campaign will utilise the existing creative and media mix which was set for the regional test campaign and due to commence in the New Year. The objective is to increase awareness of the CM Options service.
- 2.8 The Mystery Shopping exercise provided effective qualitative measurements of the CM Options service.

## **CSA**

### **Business Performance**

- 2.9 Performance of the CSA continues to show steady improvement against targets.

### **Future Scheme IT Update**

- 2.10 The Board were informed that there will be two reviews of the Commission's Change Programme in the coming months – one by the DWP's Risk and Assurance Division and another by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC).

### **Future Scheme Commissioning**

- 2.11 The organisations bidding for inclusion on the future scheme supplier framework attended briefing events with the Commission in October with a closing date for Invitation to Tender (ITT) of mid November.
- 2.12 The next step is the evaluation of the ITTs which should conclude early December. At its December meeting the Board will be informed of the Award Board's decision of the successful organisations.

### **Media Update**

- 2.13 There has been widespread coverage of the new powers for the Commission when investigating suspected criminal behaviour under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).
- 2.14 There was also some national and local newspaper reporting of data from the latest Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS).

## **3. Eradicating Child Poverty by 2020: the strategy and the role of child Maintenance**

- 3.1 The Chair welcomed Amanda Rowlatt, Director of Child Poverty and Analysis Directorate, Charlotte Clark, Head of the Child Poverty Unit and Clive Beard, Head of the Child Maintenance Sponsorship Team. The Board were updated on the DWP strategic objective and how the Commission links in with the indicator "the number of children benefiting from maintenance, particularly those living in low income households". Amanda went on to outline the progress so far with 500,000 children being lifted out of poverty since 1997.
- 3.2 The Board were updated on the passage of the Child Poverty Bill and the significant elements within it, in particular the new local duties to take action on child poverty, including a legal duty on Local Authorities and their partners to co-operate to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their area, to carry out a child poverty needs assessment, and to prepare a joint local child poverty strategy.

- 3.3 The Chair thanked Amanda, Charlotte and Clive for an interesting and lively debate and invited them to attend a Board meeting in the spring to provide an update.

#### **4. Stakeholder and Media Strategy**

- 4.1 The paper set out the Commission's strategy for engagement with stakeholders and the media over the next 12 months and outlined the approach proposed - based on being proactive, tailored and on building constructive and healthy relationships.
- 4.2 The Board discussed the messages, which seek to foster understanding about child maintenance in general and on the Commission and its services in particular. The themes for the year ahead include working with regional media on enforcement, a national Child Maintenance Options campaign and the future scheme.
- 4.3 The Commission will also engage with other government departments in order to increase their awareness and positive promotion of child maintenance in their agendas.

#### **5. Future Scheme Programme Update**

- 5.1 The Board heard how the detailed plans were being developed and updated against current activity.

#### **6. Update from the Audit Committee**

- 6.1 The Chair of the Audit Committee updated the Board on the recent activity of the Audit Committee. The Committee met in November and is due to meet again in December to discuss the audit programme for the year ahead and the ongoing work with NAO.

#### **7. Any Other Business**

- 7.1 The Board discussed the December agenda. The next meeting of the Board will take place on 18 December.