

Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission Board

Summary Minutes of the Commission Board Meeting 22 June 2010

Members:

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

Also Attending:

Justin Chamberlain
Richard d'Souza (by video conference)
Paul Lehmann (by video conference)
Jon Chadwick
Helen Pennington
Gillian Hood
Chris Wicks

Justinia Lewis - Commission Legal Adviser
Maria Jobson - Secretariat

Apologies:

Heather Jackson

1. Minutes and Matters Arising from 25 May meeting

1.1 Minutes

- 1.1.1 Subject to amendment the minutes were agreed as a full and accurate record of the meeting.

1.2 Matters Arising

- 1.2.1 The Board noted the recent appointment of Maeve Sherlock as a working peer.
- 1.2.2 The Board were updated on recent conversations with key stakeholders and further updates will be provided at future Board meetings.

2. The Commissioner's Report

Key points for the Board to note were highlighted as:

New Ministers

- 2.1 The Board were updated on the meetings that had taken place between the Chair, the Commissioner and the new Minister responsible for child maintenance. There have been two meetings with a further meeting planned at the end of June. The Secretary of State recently mentioned the issue of arrears in the House and will wish to discuss the Commission's approach to collection of arrears in due course. A meeting with the Secretary of State is currently being set up.

Financial Management

- 2.2 The Board were updated on the Client Fund Accounts for 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- 2.3 The Board were informed that other parts of government are reconsidering charges for their services, including some provided to the Commission.

CSA

Business Performance against Ministerial Targets

- 2.4 Performance of the CSA continues to be maintained against key Ministerial targets.

3. Promotion of Child Maintenance: Behaviour Change Strategy - Recommendations

- 3.1 The Board were reminded of their decisions at the February Board and their review of the five step model to develop behaviour change interventions at the April Board, where the Board requested that a detailed costed plan should be presented at this meeting for consideration.
- 3.2 The Board were reminded of the reasons outlined in the research about why separated parents have no arrangements in place for child maintenance, the evidence base for this, the “relationship themes” that the research has identified and the practical model of influences on behaviour in the short term. At the point of relationship breakdown it was agreed that, in the short term, it would not be possible to influence the NRP or PWC with regards to the nature of the breakdown, however there was a possibility to influence attitudes, values and beliefs relating to child maintenance through appropriate interventions. The Board agreed that the Commission’s strategy should be to influence perceived affordability and perceived needs.
- 3.3 The Board were then presented with a table of indicative costs, resources and timings for an Interventions implementation plan. It was highlighted that some of these costs will be reduced as work is picked up in-house.
- 3.4 The Board were then taken through how long term behaviour change could be promoted through public services. Options included influencing local and national government policy, setting up local tests to understand what works and engaging with professional bodies. The Board discussed the groups of professionals highlighted and agreed that, early years professionals should included. The Board also discussed how the Commission could reach the remaining GP surgeries that currently do not have Child Maintenance Options material and the findings from a survey by the Royal College of Midwives which indicated that midwives are frequently asked about financial issues by new mothers.

4. Spending Controls

4.1 The Board were updated on the new spending controls that have been introduced by the coalition government. In particular

4.1.1 “Immediate clampdown” on first class travel. The Treasury requested an immediate reduction in first class travel. The new Commission travel policy takes effect on 1 July 2010, with the default mode of train travel being fixed time standard class.

4.1.2 Consultancy freeze. All consultancy expenditure above £20k needs Ministerial and Treasury sign-off and all consultancy expenditure to be reported to the Minister monthly. The Board were informed that the recent decision to procure consultants for programme assurance work has been caught by this new rule and therefore will not now be carried forward.

4.2 The other spending controls that have been brought in were discussed. These are:

4.2.1 new rules on centralised procurement

4.2.2 an IT expenditure freeze; where all new IT expenditure above £1m needs Treasury sign-off

4.2.3 an immediate advertising and marketing freeze

4.2.4 a recruitment freeze on external recruitment of employees, interims and temps with exemptions for “frontline” and “business critical” posts

4.2.5 pay remits (including bonuses) have been resubmitted to the Treasury for consideration

4.2.6 new estate leases and lease extensions require Treasury sign-off.

4.3 The Board were updated on how these are being implemented by the Commission.

5. 2009/10 Annual Report and Accounts

5.1 The Board were informed that the Annual report and statement of internal control needed to be cleared by the Board following a recommendation from the Audit Committee, with final sign off by the Commissioner.

5.2 The Board then discussed the timetable for clearing and laying the report. The report should be laid before summer recess which is 27 July.

6. Commission Board Risk

6.1 The Board agreed that the Finance and Assurance Director will advise of any risks in need of escalation on a monthly basis and that the Board risks should be reviewed on a quarterly basis going forward.

7. Change Programme Update

7.1 The Future Scheme Programme has seen continued progress over the last month

and the Board were taken through and discussed the Future Scheme Dashboard in detail.

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 The Board were reminded that last month a paper was presented on implementation of the next package of Collection, Enforcement and Debt Powers in the 2008 Act and Welfare Reform Act 2009, and their decisions. The Board were then requested to make any contributions to the consultation document being prepared for this package of powers.
- 8.2 The Board discussed the issue of recovery of passports and how this might be achieved. The Board were informed that the Commission is working across government to understand what happens elsewhere.
- 8.3 The Board agreed to invite the Managing Director of the Child Support Agency to the September Board to outline operational matters and discuss performance.
- 8.4 The Board discussed the July agenda. The next meeting of the Board will take place on 20 July. A Non Executive Functions Committee will be held before the main Board meeting on 20th July, with timings to be confirmed for both meetings.