

Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission Board

Summary Minutes of the Commission Board Meeting 25 May 2010

Members:

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

Also Attending:

Angela MacDonald
Justin Chamberlain
Bill Hearn

Justinia Lewis - Commission Legal Adviser
Maria Jobson - Secretariat

Apologies:

Heather Jackson

1. Minutes and Matters Arising from 20 April meeting

1.1 Minutes

- 1.1.1 The minutes were agreed as a full and accurate record of the meeting.

1.2 Matters Arising

- 1.2.1 The Chair wished Stephen Leonard, the outgoing Customer and Commissioning Director, well in his new post and thanked him for his contributions over the past year.

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 confirmed Ministerial appointments and their portfolios. Ian Duncan Smith is the new Secretary of State and the Chair and Commissioner are due to meet with him in the next few weeks.

Maria Miller is the Junior Minister whose portfolio includes Child Maintenance and she is very interested in being involved in promoting the wider family context. The Chair and Commissioner are due to meet her on the 1st June. We will be focussed on understanding what the coalition government's priorities are on the role child maintenance can play within separating families and then assuring, over the coming months, that our priorities, policies and strategies are aligned.

Recent Media Interest

- 2.2 The publication of the latest Quarterly Summary of Statistics prompted a critical response from one stakeholder group, who had stated "despite a more than three-fold increase in legal and debt enforcement staff since 2006, and despite a suite of new enforcement powers granted by Parliament in 2008, the Agency's performance in collecting child maintenance arrears has deteriorated". We have a meeting with this organisation planned, when we will, among other things, discuss collection of arrears and the long standing issue of handling historical debt. We will explain the limitations of our current IT system on the issue of measurement and how our growing 'off system' caseload also muddies the waters.

Child Maintenance Options

- 2.3 The test of developments to the service continues. Over 7,000 calls have been received by the teams working on the various pilot initiatives to the end of April 2010. The face to face pilot acceptance rates average 33% of all those offered (against a forecast of 10%). The extended support pilot also continues to perform well at 66% take-up. The pilots must demonstrate what outcomes are achieved and the Board discussed the importance of evaluation and follow up with clients after these pilots. The offer of face to face meetings on partner premises and with partners appears to be performing less well.

CSA

Business Performance against Ministerial Targets

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

3. Change Programme update

- 3.1 The Future Scheme Programme has seen continued progress over the last month.

- 3.2 The Board were taken through the Future Scheme critical path in detail. This is a summary of all the Change Programmes that comprise the Future Scheme.
- 3.3 The Board questioned what was being done to mitigate the risks of the programme. The Board were informed that the Critical Path set out the necessary actions to achieve mitigation of these risks, and appropriate reporting processes and scrutiny are in place.

4. Review of Corporate Governance Arrangement

- 4.1 The Board agreed the main governance documents at the September and October 2008 meeting. These were:
 - 4.1.1 Code of Conduct for Board Members (September 2008)
 - 4.1.2 Scheme of Delegations (revised May 2009)
 - 4.1.3 Responsibilities (revised May 2009) – covering the roles of the Chair, the Commissioner and the corporate responsibilities of the Board Members.
 - 4.1.4 Standing Orders of the Board (April 2009), including at Annex A, terms of reference of the Non-Executive Functions Committee
 - 4.1.5 Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee (revised May 2009)
 - 4.1.6 Terms of Reference of the Remuneration Committee (revised May 2009)
- 4.2 In April 2009 the Board reviewed the documents and a number of anomalies were addressed and revisions made. The revised documents were approved by the Board in May 2009 and it was agreed to review the Corporate Governance documents in May 2010.
- 4.3 There were no particular problems or anomalies identified by the Board Secretariat in this review, apart from one revision suggested to the Remuneration Sub Committee's Term of Reference. The Remuneration Committee are meeting on 7th June, to discuss this and then recommend to the Non Executive Functions Committee on 22 June the amended wording for agreement.
- 4.4 The Board queried whether the Non Executive Directors Declaration of Interests were published on the Commission Website and how often they were updated. The Board were informed that they were reviewed on a six monthly basis, which the Board asked to be quarterly from now on. The Board requested that a register of Interests be published on the Commission website.

5. Client Strategy – proposed service developments

- 5.1 The Board considered three propositions of additional services for separated parents. Client insight suggests that further support could be beneficial in achieving the overall aim of increasing the number of effective child maintenance arrangements.
- 5.2 By way of background, the Board was reminded that separated families currently have three broad options open to them to make child maintenance arrangements:
- 5.2.1 Private arrangements which can involve money and/or other types of support.
 - 5.2.2 The statutory schemes which calculate a legal liability.
 - 5.2.3 Court consent orders.
- 5.3 The Board discussed the proposals and sought further information including the detail of the client insight before agreeing any further developments. However, the proposal that focussed on the 'cash transfer' service which had been outlined in the white paper and had been presented to stakeholders with positive feedback should continue to be developed.

6. Transition Communications

- 6.1 The Board were reminded that they had been informed in February of work that would take place in February and March to establish:
- 6.1.1 the propensity of current CSA clients, in either group, to open a statutory scheme arrangement on the Future Scheme, and
 - 6.1.2 to test the proposed Communication Journey through the transition process.
- 6.2 There were a range of both PWC and NRP focus groups and the Board were then taken through and discussed the outcomes of the work and the key themes of communicating about transition. The Board discussed the significance of the language used and the timing of the various communications.

7. Implementation of remaining Collection, Enforcement and Debt Powers in the 2008 Act and Welfare Reform Act 2009

- 7.1 The Board were updated on the powers provided in the 2008 Act that have been implemented and reminded of the paper which was presented in January 2010. The Board were then updated on the remaining powers and provided with an outline timetable which of course will require Ministerial approval.

8. Publication of Enforcement Policy

- 8.1 The Board were asked to comment and approve the Commission's proposed Enforcement Policy which will be published on the Commission Website in due course.
- 8.2 The Board were informed that the policy would provide an outline of our civil and criminal enforcement powers and give guidelines on the key considerations governing our use of these powers and our objectives in doing so.
- 8.3 The Board discussed the draft policy and agreed the content.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 The Evaluation of Options – Interim Outcome Findings paper was highlighted to the Board. This paper is an overview of the main evaluation of the CM Options service undertaken by the National Centre for Social research.
- 9.2 The Board discussed whether it was necessary to hold an August and December Board meeting. It was agreed that there was a need to keep both dates in the diary for now.
- 9.3 The Board discussed and agreed the dates for 2011.
- 9.4 The Board discussed the June agenda. The next meeting of the Board will take place on 22 June.