

Child Support Agency

Business Plan

2008/09

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The Agency is managed by an Executive Team led by the Chief Executive.

The Executive Team

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Stephen Geraghty | Chief Executive |
| Mark Grimshaw | Chief Operating Officer |
| Alan Hardy | Finance and Business Assurance Director |
| Susan Park | Strategy, Policy and Development Director |
| Ian Pavey | Human Resources Director |
| Keith Woodhouse | Business Design Director |

Non-Executive Directors, with a wide range of knowledge and experience from senior roles within other organisations, work collaboratively with the Agency's Executive Team to provide advice and guidance.

The Non-Executive Directors

- Richard Arthur
- John Cross
- Bryan Foss
- Bill Griffiths
- Peter Holden
- Susan Jillings

Chief Executive foreword

The Business Plan for 2008/09 covers the third year of the Operational Improvement Plan, which was announced by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in February 2006. The plan was designed to address client service and operational performance improvements as well as providing a stable base for a more radical, longer term redesign of the child maintenance system.

Responding to a report by Sir David Henshaw, the Government set out its plans in a White Paper, published on 13 December 2006. This included proposals to replace the Child Support Agency with a new Non-Departmental Public Body: The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission. It is anticipated that the new Commission will be established during 2008/09.

Until the new Commission is established and able to take responsibility for supporting and encouraging parents to take financial responsibility for their children, the Child Support Agency remains committed to improving the service it provides through the current child maintenance schemes.

In the coming year we will continue to deliver the benefits of the Operational Improvement Plan, collecting more money for more children and getting tougher on non-resident parents who avoid their financial responsibilities.

The initial phase of the Operational Improvement Plan focused on the organisational and operational restructuring of the Child Support Agency, and the training of our people to increase capacity and capability. While there remains more to do, performance has stabilised, with improvements in many areas. In comparison to March 2006, outcomes at the end of December 2007 include:

- A higher number of children are now benefiting from child maintenance. The Agency is now collecting or arranging money on behalf of 675,000 children (78,000 more than in March 2006).
- We are collecting and arranging more money: in the year to December 2007 the Agency collected or arranged £975m, of which £116m were arrears. This is £140m more in maintenance collected or arranged than in the year to March 2006.
- We are clearing current scheme applications: uncleared applications are down to 121,000. This is 100,000 less than in March 2006 and taking both schemes together the lowest level of uncleared work since October 2003.

In 2008/09, we aim to secure further substantial performance improvements, supported by major upgrades to our computer system. These will focus primarily on compliance and collections, helping to achieve our goal of securing more money for more children.

Client Service: Five-Year Performance Trends

| Client Service: Five-Year Performance Trends | | | | | | Position at the end of Dec 2007 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Performance Measure | March 2005 Actual | March 2006 Actual | March 2007 Actual | March 2008 Plan | March 2009 Plan | Dec 2007 Actual |
| Application processing Percentage of new scheme applications cleared within: | | | | | | |
| - 12 weeks (Dec intake) | 30% | 53% | 61% | 65% | 80% | 76% (Sept 07 intake) |
| - 18 weeks (Oct intake) | 36% | 61% | 63% | 80% | 85% | 83% (Jul 07 intake) |
| - 26 weeks (Sep intake) | 46% | 67% | 78% | 85% | 90% | 87% (Jun 07 intake) |
| Uncleared new scheme applications | 225,900 | 220,900 | 155,600 | 140,000 | 90,000 | 121,000 |
| Telephony Average answer time from queue | 1 min 40 seconds | 59 seconds | 26 seconds | Less than 30 seconds | Less than 30 seconds | 20 seconds |
| Percentage of lost calls in year | 16% | 9% | 3% | Less than 5% | Less than 5% | 2% |

Maintenance Outcomes: Five-Year Performance Trends

| Maintenance Outcomes: Five Year Performance Trends | | | | | | Position at the end of Dec 2007 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Performance Measure | March 2005 Actual | March 2006 Actual | March 2007 Actual | March 2008 Plan | March 2009 Plan | Dec 2007 Actual |
| Number of children benefiting | 542,400 | 596,800 | 641,600 | 720,000 | 790,000 | 674,700 |
| Cases in receipt of maintenance | 389,300 | 433,200 | 470,800 | 520,000 | 579,000 | 500,800 |
| Maintenance Outcomes % of cases with a current liability receiving maintenance | 61% | 61% | 62% | 66% | 69% | 62% |
| Maintenance collected / arranged In year ending: | £798m | £835m | £891m | £970m | £1,080m | £975m |
| Arrears collected In year ending | £68m | £81m | £91m | £120m | £220m | £116m |

The Child Support Agency

The Child Support Agency is part of the Department for Work and Pensions.

The Department for Work and Pensions delivers the Government's welfare reform objectives. To ensure the policies required to achieve these objectives are successful, the Department has a number of Public Service Agreements, which set out the specific targets that must be met in return for the resources provided through the Government's Spending Review.

One of the strategic objectives is to make sure all children have the best start in life by eradicating child poverty by 2020.

The Child Support Agency contributes to this wider Government objective by ensuring that parents who do not live with their children continue to meet their financial responsibilities by paying child maintenance.

Our role

We support parents in taking responsibility for their children by:

- tracing parents who no longer live with their children (non-resident parents) in cases where the parent residing with the children (the parent with care) wants support in seeking maintenance, or is required by benefits rules to seek such support;
- working out how much child maintenance should be paid by the non-resident parent, to help meet their child's everyday living costs;
- (In some cases) using this assessment to arrange payments through Maintenance Direct;
- (In other cases) administering the payments from the non-resident parent to the parent with care; and
- monitoring these payments and taking appropriate enforcement action where payments are late or missed.

Our main activities

We:

- contact parents with care and non-resident parents;
- discuss and explain the amount of child maintenance to be paid with non-resident parents and parents with care;
- in some cases, take action to trace non-resident parents;
- in some cases, resolve paternity disputes in accordance with child maintenance law;
- calculate the amount of maintenance that should be paid by the non-resident parent;
- arrange suitable methods of payment; and
- ensure that a pattern of regular payments are established.

We also continue to maintain child maintenance arrangements by:

- keeping calculations up to date when a change is reported;
- monitoring payments and discussing late payments with both parents; and
- taking action, where necessary, to re-establish payment and recover arrears through debt and legal enforcement.

Improving delivery of our services

In February 2006 we launched our Operational Improvement Plan to:

- improve our service to clients;
- increase the amount of money we collect;
- achieve greater compliance from non-resident parents; and
- provide a better platform from which to implement evolving policy in the future.

The plan is designed to deliver improving performance over three years.

The Child Support Agency Values

The Child Support Agency has developed a set of corporate values, to influence how everyone in the Agency will act. The values and behaviours are key to supporting the delivery of our Operational Improvement Plan and achieving our goal of making more difference for more children.

An important part of our Operational Improvement Plan is embedding these values to change the culture within our Agency. In 2007/08 all managers took part in events engaging issues around the Agency's culture, during which the Leadership and the Behaviour Frameworks were introduced. These ensure that managers support their people in developing a client focused, professional, open and honest, firm and fair attitude to their dealings with clients, supported by enhanced IT systems.

The programme of cultural change will continue during 2008/09. This will include looking at our progress in meeting our Client Service Standards and delivery of events for managers to explore leadership styles and how these can influence our people and affect client outcomes. We will use feedback from our clients, and our colleagues to measure how our culture is changing.

ACHIEVING THE BEST

Client service standards

In the first year of the Operational Improvement Plan we produced Client Service Standards. The standards provide a clear commitment to our clients about the service they can expect from the Agency. Substantial improvements against these standards have been made in the first two years of the Operational Improvement Plan, especially in first contact and response times where performance is now ahead of our original expectations. We have reviewed the standards in light of this performance and concluded that they remain valid for 2008/09. For completeness, we have added a standard on accuracy of maintenance assessments and calculations.

What clients can expect from us

First contact

Standard 1

If the parent with care can give us contact details for the non-resident parent, we will start gathering information from the non-resident parent within four weeks of the application being received. We will aim to make an accurate decision on the application within 12 weeks, but in some cases this may take as long as 26 weeks.

If we do not have current contact details for the non-resident parent, we will trace them as quickly as we can. These applications may take longer to progress. In the small number of cases where we cannot trace the non-resident parent, we will not be able to progress the application.

Payments

Standard 2

Where we are collecting child maintenance, we aim to make a first payment to the parent with care within six weeks of making the initial payment arrangements with the non-resident parent.

If the non-resident parent has a job but either fails or refuses to pay, we will aim to obtain payment via a Deduction from Earnings Order within four months of making initial payment arrangements.

Where the non-resident parent has still not paid four months after initial payment arrangements were made, we will refer the case to our specialist enforcement unit.

Standard 3

We will make maintenance payments to parents with care within a week of receiving the money from the non-resident parent.

Response times

Standard 4

We aim to answer telephone calls within one minute.

Standard 5

We aim to reply to letters and either resolve complaints, or agree next steps, within three weeks of receiving them.

Complaints

Standard 6

There are up to three stages to the appeals process.

Stage 1

At this stage, we will look at your appeal and either:

- revise the decision ourselves; or
- submit the appeal to the Tribunals Service for action.

Currently around half of all appeals are resolved within the Child Support Agency at this stage.

This stage will take an average of 10 weeks.

Stage 2

If the Tribunals Service is dealing with the appeal, they will investigate and notify us of their decision within 19 weeks of the appeal being submitted to them.

The Tribunals Service is part of the Department for Constitutional Affairs and provides administrative support for the main central government tribunals.

The Tribunals Service has the responsibility of bringing together the people involved to ensure that an unbiased decision is reached in a way that best meets client's expectations.

Stage 3

Once the Tribunals Service has notified us of their decision, we will revise client's child maintenance decision if necessary. This stage will take an average of one week.

Accuracy

Standard 7

We will aim to provide an accurate calculation of the maintenance liability. Accuracy is defined by whether the weekly assessment is within £1 or 2 per cent of the correct liability, whichever is the greater.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Delivering year three of the Operational Improvement Plan

We launched the Operational Improvement Plan in February 2006. The plan, which lasts for three years, is designed to help us fundamentally change the way we work, helping us focus on the things that matter most to our clients. It is set out under four headings:

Getting it right – gathering information and assessing applications;
Keeping it right – active case management;
Putting it right – enforcing responsibilities; and
Getting the best from the organisation.

In 2008/09 we will be delivering the third year of the plan. We will continue to embed the changes we have introduced in the first two years of the plan. A number of real and lasting benefits will also be visible. These include:

Getting it right

- improved client communications through better inbound telephony systems and simplified leaflets and letters; and
- a dedicated helpline to assist employers working with the Agency.

Keeping it right

- improving the way in which we deal with our more difficult cases; and
- the mechanisms by which we trace our clients, including improving our use of the services provided by specialist credit reference agencies and working with other organisations, including HM Revenue and Customs.

Putting it right

- using our powers in a direct and continuous way to improve the collection of historic debt, both by our own people and by working with specialist debt collection agencies; and
- improvements to our computer systems which will boost productivity, aid our debt and legal enforcement activities and increase levels of case compliance.

Getting the best from the organisation

- an improved performance management process to support managers in delivering on-going service improvements;
- improvements to our people's skills through targeted training and development activity; and
- improvements to our computer system which help us to:
 - become more productive;

- sort out problems with cases which cannot currently be progressed;
- improve financial accounting; and
- manage payments more effectively for clients.

RESPECTING PEOPLE

Our diversity and equality strategy

Our strategic goal is to make diversity one of our greatest assets and to ensure equality of opportunity for all. We are committed to creating a working environment that provides challenging roles for our people, giving them a wide range of opportunities to help them develop their skills and knowledge for improved performance for our clients.

Building on the arrangements already in place, we will identify opportunities to meet the diverse needs of our clients so that they are able to receive services appropriate to their needs.

Actions and priorities in 2008/09

In the third year of the Operational Improvement Plan we will build on our Inspirational Leadership and Culture Programmes, which began in 2006 and continued through 2007, by working to embed leadership behaviours in our managers. We will deliver a broader, business-focused range of training for our people. This will enhance their technical knowledge and skills, encouraging them to focus on the client's needs in everything they do.

For 2008/09 this will include:

- continuing to provide training for people working in Caseworker, Team Leader and Operational Management roles. This will be supported by ongoing coaching to embed the new client focused behaviours and operating model processes throughout the Agency to improve services to our clients; and
- engaging with our people through surveys to measure progress towards the desired cultural change within the Child Support Agency. This will provide direction for further client focus work to be undertaken and will help to deliver more money for more children.

LOOKING OUTWARDS

Working with stakeholders and others

To help us continue to improve our service and to meet the needs of our clients we work with a range of individuals, stakeholder organisations and client groups. These relationships help us to learn about our client's experiences of dealing with us and to respond constructively to problems and complaints.

Our stakeholders include:

- those who speak on behalf of clients;
- those who provide advice and guidance to clients;
- those who provide services for us; and
- those who scrutinise and challenge the services we provide and how we deliver them.

We also work closely with other businesses and across Government:

- to increase the information available to trace non-resident parents;
- to calculate maintenance liability; and
- to ensure that payment is made.

Our partners include:

- Jobcentre Plus;
- Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs;
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency;
- Her Majesty's Courts Service; and
- Employers.

We also work with our Department for Work and Pensions colleagues in the Child Maintenance Re-design Programme on the development of the new Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Secretary of State's targets for 2008/09

The Secretary of State's targets have been designed to complement the Operational Improvement Plan commitments. They aim to ensure that the Agency is firmly on track to achieve improved performance in the final year of the Programme. They are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of children | By 31 March 2009, maintenance will be collected or have been arranged by the Agency on behalf of 790,000 children |
| Total Maintenance Collection (Arrears) | Collect or have arranged £1,080 million in child maintenance between 1 st April 2008 and 31 st March 2009; of which at least £220 million maintenance will be arrears. |
| Maintenance Outcomes | By 31 st March 2009, in 69% of cases across both the new and old schemes in which a liability to pay maintenance exists, the non-resident parent has either made a payment via the collection service or a Maintenance Direct arrangement is in place. |
| Un-cleared Applications to the New Scheme | By 31 st March 2009, the volume of un-cleared new scheme applications will be no more than 90,000. |

RESOURCES for 2008/09

Finance

The Net Administration Cost for 2008/09 is expected to be £489 million (excludes capital).

2008/09 is the first year of a three year spending review period, which has been agreed by the Department for Work and Pensions. We have a requirement to balance our financial resources over the whole of this three year period.

The figure includes a proportion of the £120 million additional investment that the Department for Work and Pensions made available to fund our Operational Improvement Plan between 2006 and 2009.

People and Estates

We currently employ around 9,500 people (whole time equivalent position in March 2008) with additional people employed by the Department for Social Development Northern Ireland and our provider of clerical case services Vertex who also carry out work for the Agency. We work from six main offices with a network of smaller local sites across England, Scotland and Wales. Our main offices are in:

- Dudley
- Hastings
- Falkirk
- Plymouth
- Birkenhead, and
- Belfast

We also have offices in Newcastle and London, where employees who work for our Central Directorates are based.

For further information or to contact us

Write to

Chief Executive
Child Support Agency
PO Box 55
Brierley Hill
West Midlands
DY5 1YL

Website

You can find more information about our services at **www.csa.gov.uk**

Helpline

For information and advice about child maintenance, call our national helpline on 08457 133 133 or textphone 08457 138 924.

Both lines are open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm on Saturdays. Calls are charged at local rate.

If you want to speak to us in Welsh, you can ring our Welsh Language helpline on 08457 138 091. The line is open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Calls are charged at local rate.

We may record our phone calls to check our service and to train our employees.

Leaflets

You can get copies of our information leaflets by downloading them from our website at **www.csa.gov.uk/en/about/publications.asp**

Or you can get them by calling our national helpline on 08457 133 133 or textphone 08457 138 924.

Alternative formats

This business plan and our information leaflets are available in other languages (including Welsh), in large print, in Braille and on audio cassette. You can get these formats by phoning us on 08457 133 133. textphone 08457 138 924.

The business plan is also available at **www.csa.gov.uk**