

Security Operation Group (SOG)
Minutes of the SOG meeting held on Thursday, 15 May 2008 at CIPFA
London

Attendees:

Cathy Payne	DWP HB Strategy Division (Chair)
Tracey Banfield	Bradford
Jean Cheeseman	South Bucks
Jackie Dye	Camden
Jill Hawtin	Bradford
Karen McNeil	East Ayrshire
Tim Fisher	Haringey
Ian Gibbins	JCP Partnerships
Mary Collins	DWP Fraud and Error Strategy Division
Jane Perfect	DWP Local Authority Performance Division
Phil Massey	DWP Local Authority Performance Division
Liz Cooper	Audit Commission
Graham Dove	DWP Housing Benefit Strategy Division
Fiona Campbell	DWP Housing Benefit Strategy Division
James Ablewhite	DWP Housing Benefit Strategy Division
Kenny Otemade-Paul	DWP Housing Benefit Strategy Division

(Minutes)

1.0 Apologies

John Rosenbloom (Manchester), Diane Baker (Peterborough), Steven Carey (Leeds), and Elaine Turner (Carlisle).

2.0 Welcome and Domestics

2.1 Cathy Payne welcomed all to the meeting.

3.0 Minutes of the last Meeting/Matters arising/Action Points

3.1 The minutes of the meeting were cleared. The following comments were made on the action points log:

Action point Feb 1: Ian Gibbins was to clarify 14 month timeline on SOLP duties. An update paper was sent to SOG members with the agenda prior to the meeting. Action point cleared.

Action point Feb 2: LA representatives were asked to submit a detailed log of the issues raised re Ad-Pens to FESD for discussion at a future Prosecution Policy Steering Group. To date no issues have been sent to FESD.

Action point Feb 3: PM 10/PM16 & Right Benefit, HBSD was to take away the comments raised here for discussion with LAPD and the Audit Commission. Subsequently a detailed update was published in the recent GIB 09/2008. Action point cleared.

Action point Feb 4: John Viggers to raise the issue of unadjusted figures on HOBOD at the next Local Authority Association Steering Group (LAASG) meeting on 12 March and update the Group. Fiona gave an update at the meeting and commented that HRAD will continue to adjust the figures alongside the figures the LAs submit and both figures will be published. Action point cleared.

Action point Feb 5: **Person Centric Referrals:** Steven Carey was to nominate a person for the stakeholder/steering groups to John Viggers. To date no nominees have been received. Action point cleared.

Action point Feb 6: Graham Dove was to update SOG at the next meeting on the issue of a lead organisation issuing a caution on behalf of another body. Graham gave an update stating DWP is still in the process of adjusting the delegation functions and advice will be going out in the next few weeks. Action point cleared.

Action point Feb 7: A copy of the revised FPA6 form will be sent to Graham Dove for further action. Graham confirmed that a copy of the form was received and has been forwarded to FIS for comment. Subsequently a circular/bulletin will be published which will include the form. Action point cleared

Action point Feb 8: **SSFA AOs - Additional circular:** DWP was to re-word the circular and then pass to Steve Carey prior to publication. Graham Dove confirmed that the circular had been re-worded, a circular sent out (GIB 05/2008) and appeals received. Action point cleared.

Action point Feb 9: **Audit Commission report on decision making:** LA representatives were asked to send their recommendations to Ian Gibbins for further action. Ian said he did not understand why that action point had been allocated to him and Cathy Payne agreed. However, to date, no recommendations had been received.

Action point 10: Graham Dove was to follow-up on whether changes to charges in **joint prosecution cases** are being referred to the LAs. Graham Dove gave an update based on a recent meeting he attended with the Prosecution Division. The Prosecuting solicitors should always go back to the client if there are any changes in charges. Action point cleared

Action point 11: Ian Gibbins to keep SOG, Practitioners Operation Group (POG), and the LAASG up to date on whom problems should be escalated after the Joint Boards. Ian Gibbins stated that he will develop a program and will update SOG in future. Action point cleared.

4.0 HBR fraud & error results

4.1 Graham Dove gave a short presentation on the HBR Fraud and Error Review which was published that morning for the period April 2006 to March 2007 and October 2006 to September 2007. He also highlighted the following:

- Housing Benefit came out well in the new figures compared to other DWP benefits;
- that there are still a lot of outstanding HBR cases within the local authorities and LAs are not responding to the reminder sent to them.

4.2 SOG members' advice was that a targeted approach on individual LAs should be used and a letter should be sent to their Fraud and Benefit Managers.

5.0 HB Fraud and Error Project – Update

5.1 ETD. The project is to look at the end-to-end process of ETDs and see if it can be streamlined, and to identify any other issues that contribute to HB error that can be addressed.

Note: If anyone wishes to talk to PDT about issues with ETDs please send your contact details to Fiona.C.Campbell@dwp.gsi.gov.uk and she will forward your details to PDT.

5.2 Communication Toolkit. The toolkit will give LAs advice on producing a communications strategy to encourage their customers to report changes in circumstance, along with some tools e.g. poster and leaflet templates that they can use.

5.3 Error Awareness. Fiona advised that JCP are undertaking the error awareness pilot and that FEPT will be contributing to their package.

5.4 Credit Reference Agencies. Graham advised the SOG members that once the contract with the CRA has been signed, the pilot data will be matched first, followed by the other 15 LAs in September.

5.5 L & D. L&D have got funding for next year and they will be running all the PINs courses. L&D will be contacting LAs in June. L&D are also looking at delivering courses through e-Learning via the IRRV website.

6.0 Voice Risk Analysis (VRA)

6.1 James Ablewhite gave a short presentation on the result and evaluation following the first phase of the pilot.

- 6.2 James also highlighted that the Minister announced funding for a second phase of the pilot, and that in the next phase of piloting we intend to:
- Apply VRA to new claims;
 - Identify business efficiencies;
 - Test VRA in a wider range of circumstances and that DWP will be writing to all Chief Executives to invite them to participate in the extended trial.

7.0 Social Security Fraud Act Authorised Officers (SSFA AO) Appeals

- 7.1 Graham Dove gave an update on the response received from the Bulletin G5/2008 from LAs asking for additional SSFA Authorised Officers. This paper was sent to SOG members before the meeting. Graham pointed out that he has only received four requests.
- 7.2 It was agreed by the SOG members that out of the four local authorities, only LA (A) should be granted two AOs based on the DWP criteria of one AO being able to process 30 requests per month. SOG agreed to inform just the LAs who have appealed about the criteria used.

8.0 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) SSFA Powers

- 8.1 Graham Dove explained that the paper sent out with the agenda was for information about a likely debate to be held in Parliament before the summer recess.
- 8.2 Graham also informed members that there could be a financial implication to both DWP and LAs based on the concern raised by the telecommunication providers over the use of SSFA powers.
- 8.3 SOG nominated Diane Baker to attend any meetings held with the telecomms providers.
- 8.4 LAs asked if the wording in the second paragraph in annex B could be amended to delete the word "Housing". Graham agreed to notify the Home Office.

9.0 Compliance workshop

- 9.1 Compliance is currently carried out by Jobcentre Plus – and there is consideration about setting up a workshop with LAs to consider whether this procedure could be adapted for use in LAs, possibly as part of their interventions strategy.
- 9.2 SOG agreed there is a need for a workshop, and both benefit and fraud managers should be invited.

10.0 AOB

- 10.1 The LA representatives commented that they are still awaiting a meeting to evaluate the new procedures involving JCP/TPS with reference to the latest NFI.
- 10.2 Graham will try to get the group together soon and he also informed the representatives that the NFI report would be out on Friday 16 May 2008.
- 10.3 Graham gave an update on behalf of DVLA concerning the Driving Licence card:
- The photograph on the photocard driving Licence is only valid for 10 years;
 - The first photographs will start to expire from July 2008 onwards;
 - LAs are asked to check the expiry date and remind the customers of their need to renew them.

Graham was advised to put the above information in a general bulletin.

- 10.4 LAs representatives would like more advance notice should we need to cancel a meeting.