

GLO Compensation Scheme Advisory Board

Report of first meeting, 9 January 2023

Members present: Prof. Christopher Hodges (Chair); Lord Arbuthnot; Kevan Jones MP.

Also present: Carl Creswell (BEIS), Rob Brightwell (BEIS).

Background to the scheme

1. BEIS presented a briefing on the background to the scheme and progress to date, including
 - 1.1 Objectives of the scheme
 - 1.2 The claimants, including groups of special concern
 - 1.3 An overview of the process and principles of the scheme
 - 1.4 Claimant representation and provision for claimants' reasonable legal costs
 - 1.5 Interim payments.
 - 1.6 Project risks.
2. In discussion, Board members agreed that
 - 2.1 As with the general law, the goal should be to restore the claimants to the position that they would have been in if the scandal had not happened.
 - 2.2 Building postmasters' trust in the scheme was crucial. To help with this it was important that the scheme should now proceed at pace. The next key step was for the claim forms to be finalised, in light of the month-long consultation, and to issue by the end of February, supported by helpful guidance and Q&A material.
 - 2.3 There could be value in "restorative justice" – such as personal apologies to individual postmasters.
 - 2.4 BEIS should prioritise claims carefully, dealing first with people in acute hardship, those claims which needed the longest lead-time and those which could be simply resolved.
 - 2.5 Parts of claims which had been agreed should be paid, even if other elements of the same claim had not yet been resolved.
 - 2.6 BEIS should, by April, develop targets against which they could monitor case throughput.
3. The BEIS team confirmed that the proposals on legal fees had been misrepresented. The first payment of £900 was for initial contact with the client only. BEIS was currently developing a full tariff of fees in discussion with claimants' lawyers.

Draft Terms of Reference

4. The Advisory Board reviewed draft Terms of Reference for its work. It agreed that the Minister should be asked to agree the draft, subject to some minor changes.

Content of future meetings

5. The Board agreed that at future meetings it should consider
 - 5.1 Reports on progress against milestones
 - 5.2 Data on flow of cases, including cases of special concern
 - 5.3 Updated risk analysis
 - 5.4 Financial report and projection
6. The next meeting would also consider an explanation from BEIS of the principles to be used in key areas of the scheme, including on bankruptcy.

Transparency of the Board's work

7. The Board agreed that following each meeting, a report agreed with the Board's Chair should be published on the BEIS website, with a copy sent to the Minister.