

Minutes

Title of meeting	Citizenship Ceremonies Liaison Group		
Date	5 th May 2009	Time	11.30am
Venue	Meeting Room 2, 1 st Floor, The Plaza		
Chair	John Kelly	Secretary	Jo Clinton
Attendees	Mark Rimmer	Copies to	Bobbi Selby
	Alan Clarke		Linda Edwards
	Tony Dalton		Sandra Stanley
	Alison Quigley		Paulette McGhan
	Sandra Jones		Jason McKenzie
	Eric Powell		Paul Gannon
	Jan Luff		
	Alicja Gilroy		
	Jane Whitehead		
	Mike Burgess		
	Leila Keating		
	Tony Fairbrother		
	Mick Cain		
	Catherine Monaghan		
1. Apologies	Ian Page, Paul Gannon and Sandra Stanley		

John Kelly introduced himself as the new Deputy Director of Nationality and welcomed everyone to the meeting. John also passed on Sharon Helm's thanks for all the cards and good wishes she had received.

2. Actions from previous meeting

Earned citizenship

Amendment of birth certificates to show immigration status of parents would require legislation and was being looked at by IPS Policy.

Action point 1: There needs to be a read across for the certificate of marriage approvals to ensure it is joined up working. Jane Whitehead to pursue.

New Welcome Packs

Action 2: To be covered under item 5 on the agenda.

Workflow and Nationality intake

Action 3: Mick Cain now includes these figures in the monthly newsletter.

Review of citizenship ceremony

Action 5: This was ongoing, still trying to identify suitable date.

Action 6: Alicja Gilroy had received feedback from new citizens on ceremonies.

OISC Membership

Action 7: To be covered under item 10 on the agenda.

3. Workflow and Nationality intake

Tony Fairbrother explained that the surge in intake at the end of February/beginning March had not dropped and was still running at between 570-600 applications per day. Overtime was continuing, at present this was one day per weekend. The plan was to clear the backlog by the end of May. The WIP was currently 40,000. John Kelly said there was a business case to increase the number of staff to deal with the WIP. Mark Rimmer said it was good to know if extra resources were to be put in place, to help them arrange for ceremonies.

Alan Clarke asked when the Earned Citizenship policy went through was an increase expected and would Nationality be staffed to cope. John Kelly said an increase was expected and there were a number of alternatives being worked on. Tony Dalton explained there were many people who could apply but had not, which could result in a surge of between 100k-150k. Alan Clarke asked if intelligence NCS had would help with the planning. Tony Dalton said 5 of them had provided information to feed back for the modelling. One of the alternatives was the opportunity to book a place in the queue. This would enable Nationality to advise equally as the information was received. Tony Dalton asked if NCS providers would be in favour of a booking system. Mark Rimmer thought they would.

4. NCS Training

Mick Cain stated there were two training sessions planned in May. John Kelly would attend South Lincolnshire. Mick Cain explained that Nationality were looking to cut down on the costs of colleagues travelling to give NCS training, with either the training held in Liverpool or LAs covering the cost of travel. Tony Dalton was to check with the Charging Team if this could be done. Tony Dalton flagged this as a potential charge from next April. Mark Rimmer thought this was perfectly reasonable for the relevant LAs to incur the training costs.

5. Citizenship Packs

Tony Fairbrother explained there had been a few problems with supplies and delivery, which were conducted by different companies. The suppliers would be approached to see if they could arrange for one person to produce and distribute the packs. Mike Burgess said the main problem had been IPS not sending the passport application letter, IPS would only deliver the application letter to the Post Office. It was suggested that all the documents should be kept separate to accommodate changes. Mark Rimmer stressed that local government would be very much against this or withdrawal as the packs were very well received by the applicants. Alan Clarke said he supported Mark Rimmer. John Kelly said savings had to be made but he would report back to Matthew Coats the feelings of the LAs. Mark Rimmer would send a letter confirming that they would be against withdrawal of packs. Tony Fairbrother confirmed they would look at options to provide an improved service. Jane Whitehead suggested contacting IPS printers to see if they could produce the packs. Leila Keating said another order had been placed but this may take up to 8 weeks.

DN: a formal request for 80,000 packs has been placed with the first set of pack due for delivery w/c 1st June.

Action Point 1: Tony Fairbrother to explore printing and supply options.

Action Point 2: Mark Rimmer to write regarding Citizenship packs.

6. Active Citizenship and NCS

Tony Dalton said the design group were still looking at what would qualify for active citizenship. There was a huge amount of detail to discuss. There was nothing to report at present.

7. Impact of new fee levels

Tony Fairbrother said the fees had increased on 6th April while intake rose to 570-600 applications per day. At present a number of applications were still being rejected for the wrong fee. Intake was again expected to rise when Earned Citizenship was introduced.

8. Auditing (Schools)

Tony Dalton explained after the introduction of ceremonies 2004 Nationality were to carry out visits in the form of inspections but this had not been done but now wanted to set up something more formal, including the more remote locations. Nationality wanted to allow their caseworkers to visit as a developmental opportunity, with a checklist to look at how ceremonies are conducted. Mark Rimmer welcomed this as it would be really good to ensure the gift, refreshments etc were provided as part of the fee. Alison Quiqley asked what the inspections would be based on. Tony Dalton said they would be by arrangement using a standard template. Eric Powell agreed to forward a copy of part of the ONS handbook which dealt with citizenship which was being re-launched on 11th May 2009.

Action Point 3: Tony Dalton to produce checklist template for next meeting.

Action Point 4: Eric Powell to forward copy of part of handbook which dealt with citizenship.

9. DX tracking numbers

Alicja Gilroy asked if NCS should write the DX number in pencil on the applications form. Over the last few week they had received several calls asking them to provide the DX tracking number of each applicant. Mick Cain asked if all the details could be sent to him in an email and he would look into this.

10. Any other business

OISC

Tony Dalton explained after a meeting with OISC, which he attended with Mark Rimmer and Mick Cain, they had been sensitive to their arguments and agreed to a more light touch. The registration process had been refined and it should now be easier.

Citizenship ceremony transfers

Mike Burgess explained there had been an increase in the number of applicants requesting a transfer which seemed to be to obtain a quicker ceremony, this led to an increase in work for CCST. Mark Rimmer understood the problems caused for Nationality but some LAs did not provide a ceremony for 6 weeks so he could sympathise with the applicant. Tony Dalton said applicants should be discouraged from moving around as it was supposed to be a local ceremony to welcome them into the local community. Mark Rimmer thought there may be a problem if this was challenged, although he did welcome the principle of applicants being welcomed into their local community. Mark Rimmer agreed to send an email to the LAs.

Other

Jan Luff said despite Phil Woolas giving his commitment to having a post ABNI committee nothing had happened to date, Just to clarify her position, she had continued to work with Tony Dalton and others but did not really have anyone to represent.

Tony Dalton reported that the Regional Manager from the Passport Office in Belfast was to attend a citizenship ceremony and advise on passport questions. It was agreed this was a good idea and Tony Dalton would report back after the event.

Action Point 5: Tony Dalton to report back at the next meeting.

Alicja Gilroy had received feedback from citizens regarding an increase in mistakes on certificates. Tony Dalton said this had been reduced to 1% but the intake surge may have increased this, he would look into it again. There had been also been an increase in complaints regarding the length of time taken to answer calls. John Kelly said a new stream of work had been taken on recently which had doubled the Contact Centre workload. A new telephony system was being installed and more staff being recruited to improve the service.

Alan Clarke explained they were experiencing difficulties with designated email addresses if staff were away from work. Mike Burgess suggested a generic mailbox be set up and access given to those who need it.

Mark Rimmer asked if there had been any progress on the possibility of electronic notification. Mike Burgess had contacted Geoff Bayliss who was due to have a meeting in Liverpool regarding this issue, nothing further heard but would chase again. John Kelly said there was a major project underway called ICW and this was one of the areas being looked into.

Action Point 6: Mike Burgess to contact Geoff Bayliss re electronic notification.

Alison Quigley said they had received a remittance advice which did not match the remittance email and wondered if others had been experiencing problems. Mike Burgess thought this was just a one off, no other problems had been reported.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1st July 2009.

Meeting	No	Action Point	Owner	Update
14/1/09	1	There needs to be a read across for the certificate of marriage approvals to ensure it is joined up working. Jane Whitehead to pursue	J Whitehead	
14/1/09	5	Second meeting of working group to be arranged	J Clinton	Meeting arranged for 23/6/09
05/05/09	1	Tony Fairbrother to explore options for production of citizenship packs	T Fairbrother	
05/05/09	2	Mark Rimmer to write regarding citizenship packs	M Rimmer	
05/05/09	3	Tony Dalton to produced checklist template for next meeting	T Dalton	
05/05/09	4	Eric Powell to forward part of handbook which deals with citizenship	E Powell	
05/05/09	5	Tony Dalton to report back on Belfast IPS attendance at Citizenship Ceremony	T Dalton	
05/05/09	6	Mike Burgess to contact Geoff Bayliss re electronic notification	M Burgess	

