



Department
for Work &
Pensions

To: Chris Curry, Senior Responsible Owner
for the Pensions Dashboard Programme

Date: 01 April 2021

From: Caroline Siarkiewicz, Chief Executive, Money and Pensions Service

Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions

Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure and Projects Authority

Appointment of Chris Curry as Senior Responsible Owner for the Pensions Dashboards Programme

This letter formalises your role as the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Pensions Dashboards Programme, effective from 01st April 2021. This will be a part-time role. You are directly accountable to the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) Chief Executive as MaPS Accounting Officer, under the oversight of the Minister for Pensions.

As SRO you are personally responsible for delivering the Programme. You are held accountable for delivering its objectives, benefits and policy intent, for securing and protecting its vision, for ensuring that it is governed responsibly, reported honestly, issues escalated appropriately and for influencing constructively the context, culture and operating environment of the Programme.

You will carry out this role alongside your existing role as Director of the Pensions Policy Institute. You have agreed to work 21 hours per week on the Programme to enable you to fulfil your SRO responsibilities. This is more than 50% of a full time role.

As SRO, you remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the project in accordance with the objectives and policy intent as set by Ministers. When considering your relationship with Ministers, it may be helpful to refer to the [Ministerial Code](#).

In addition to your internal accountabilities, you should also be aware that SROs of GMPP programmes and projects are held personally accountable to Parliamentary Select Committees. You will be expected to account for, and explain, decisions and actions you have taken to deliver the programme or specific milestones within the delivery plan.

More information on this is set out in [Giving Evidence to Select Committees – Guidance for Civil Servants](#), sometimes known as the Osmotherly Rules. SRO roles and responsibilities are detailed in the Infrastructure and Project Authority's (IPA) guidance on [the role of the Senior Responsible Owner](#). It is important to be clear that your accountability to Parliament relates only to implementation, within the terms agreed in this letter. It will remain for the Minister to account for the relevant policy decisions and development.

Tenure of Position

You will be expected to remain in this role until the end of your current contract with MaPS, 7th July 2023. Any extension beyond this date will be discussed with you at least six months in advance and no later than 3 months before your contract comes to an end.

During your tenure, it is important that a handover process is in place for succession planning to ensure continuity and a seamless transition should you depart your role at the end of your contract. These arrangements should be agreed with the Permanent Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions.

Objectives and Performance Criteria

The Pensions Dashboards Programme's (PDP) vision is: "To enable individuals to access their pensions information online, securely and all in one place, thereby supporting better planning for retirement and growing financial wellbeing."

The Programme has been established to work with the pensions industry to deliver dashboards service in the UK. The Programme has three outcomes:

- technical architecture necessary for Pensions Dashboards to operate
- governance arrangements to protect all ecosystem participants and support the operation of dashboard services
- service design and steady state operating model for the dashboard service

The implementation period is currently estimated to be 2020 – 2025, by which time individuals will be able to access a pensions dashboard of their choosing and request sight of their pensions information.

As SRO of the Pensions Dashboards Programme, you have responsibility to ensure that the Programme remains aligned with the MaPS Strategy and Corporate Plan.

Proposed changes to the programme scope which impact on government policy, digital transformation or the benefits your programme has been set up to deliver must be authorised by the Chief Executive of MaPS.

As SRO, you are expected to run your project in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#). Further detail on your role and responsibilities as SRO are set out [in IPA guidance on the role of the senior responsible owner](#), and you are expected to follow that guidance, and other IPA guidance on the management of major projects.

Programme Status

The Programme status is reflected in the latest quarterly return to the IPA, where the most recent assessment of deliverability was Amber.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the MaPS Board have agreed a budget of £7.9m for the financial year 2021/22. This provides a ceiling within which all activity must be undertaken.

There is a formal governance structure in place, the Programme overseen by a Pensions Dashboards Sub-Committee (a sub-Committee of the MaPS Board) and the MaPS Board. There is also a MaPS Schedule of Delegated Authorities which includes the authorities for the Pensions Dashboards.

Detailed guidance on SRO roles and responsibilities is attached at Annex 2. You should follow that guidance and also ensure that you understand the guidance “Giving Evidence to Select Committees – Guidance for Civil Servants”¹ and make yourself aware of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority guidance on the management of major projects².

Extent and Limit of Accountability

(1) Finance and Controls

All expenditure by you must be through the formal governance structure and within the Schedule of Financial Delegations, which is agreed by the MaPS Board. Financial responsibilities are set out clearly in the Delegated Financial Authority along with its conditions for spending, as agreed between you and the Chief Executive.

Departmental (DWP) spending controls will apply, as set out within the MaPS CEO’s Delegated Spending Authority letter. Where the Pensions Dashboards Programme exceeds the delegated authority set by DWP, the Treasury Approval Point process will apply and the details of each approval process must be agreed with the MaPS Board Pensions Dashboards Sub-Committee (the ‘Sub-Committee’).

You should note in particular that where expenditure is considered novel, contentious, repercussive or likely to result in costs to other parts of the public sector, following any decisions taken by the Pensions Dashboards Sub-Committee and, HM Treasury (HMT) approval will be required regardless of whether the project exceeds the delegated authority set by HMT.

Additionally, following recommendation from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), from April 2017 an accounting officer assessment should always be produced for projects or programmes which form part of the Government’s Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) at the Outline Business Case stage (or at the point when it enters the GMPP if this is later). As the Pensions Dashboard Programme forms part of the GMPP you should ensure that an accounting officer assessment is prepared at the Outline Business Case stage, which is currently planned for March 2022.

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/364600/Osmotherly_Rules_October_2014.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-teams/major-projects-authority>

You should note an updated accounting officer assessment should be prepared at subsequent stages of the Pensions Dashboard Programme if it departs from the four standards (regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility), or the agreed plan – including any contingency – in terms of costs, benefits, timescales, or level of risk, which informed the accounting officer's previous approval.

It is for you, as the SRO, to decide whether or not an accounting officer assessment should be prepared at any other stage of the programme. You should be prepared to defend your decisions to Parliament if challenged, for example, if called to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee.

You should operate at all times within the rules set out in [Managing Public Money](#). In addition, you must be mindful of, and act in accordance with, the specific Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to the Pensions Dashboards Programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#)

(2) Delegated departmental/project authority

You are authorised to approve expenditure within your delegated authority limits agreed with the MaPS CEO.

You are authorised to agree Programme rescheduling that remains within the currently agreed Programme lifecycle. Any proposals for rescheduling beyond this must be agreed with the Sub-Committee.

You are also responsible for recommending to MaPS CEO and the Sub-Committee the need to either pause or terminate the programme if necessary and in a timely manner.

Where issues arise which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these issues to the MaPS CEO and the Sub-Committee.

Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA)

Given the scale of the programme and the fact that your contract runs to 2023, you will be exempt from the requirement to attend MPLA.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you success in your role as SRO.

Yours sincerely,



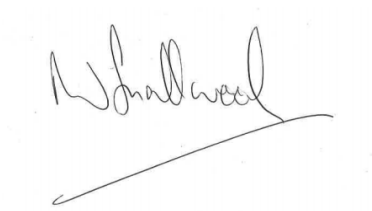
Caroline Siarkiewicz

Chief Executive, MaPS



Peter Schofield

Permanent Secretary, DWP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Smallwood', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Nick Smallwood

Chief Executive, IPA

I confirm that I accept the appointment including my personal accountability for implementation of the programme detailed in the letter above.

Name of SRO: Chris Curry

Signature of SRO:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Curry', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Date: 1 April 2021

Addendum to Programme Status section (page 3, paragraph 2)

The 2021-22 budget for the PDP was revised in August 2021 to £17.3m. This was to reflect the reprofiling of development spend towards the start of the Programme. The whole life budget for the Programme to 2024/25 is £90.5m based on the business cases approved in respect of central technical architecture delivery and identity service provision.

Senior Responsible Owner Role and Accountabilities

The role of the SRO

You are personally accountable for ensuring the on-going delivery of the programme. You are responsible for ensuring the related implementation and transition activities will deliver the agreed objectives and the benefits stated in the Business Case.

You must ensure the effectiveness of the governance, assurance and programme management arrangements and maintain them through the life of the programme. You should adopt best practice and be prepared to justify any deviation from it, in line with guidance published by the Cabinet Office.

An SRO will:

- Be a visible, engaged and active programme leader, not a figurehead;
- Deliver the agreed outcomes and benefits;
- Create an open, honest and positive culture committed to delivering at pace;
- Challenge senior officers and Ministers when appropriate and escalate quickly;
- Provide appropriate support, steer and strategic focus to the Programme Director and ensure they have a clear and current letter of appointment; and
- Have sufficient time, experience and the right skills to carry the full responsibilities of the role.

Specific SRO accountabilities

Set up the programme for success

- Ensure the programme is set-up to make an unambiguous and demonstrable link to strategic policy;
- Translate the policy intent into clear deliverables which are established and agreed with senior stakeholders;
- Carry out robust and commercially viable options appraisal, which balances the risk with opportunity, as part of initial programme feasibility;
- Establish a firm Business Case for the programme during the initiation/definition phase and ensure any planned changes continue to be aligned with the business;
- Identify and secure the necessary investment for the Business Case (this includes both budget and operational resource);
- Design and implement robust, appropriate and transparent programme governance;
- Build strong and effective relationships with key stakeholders, justifying their trust and retaining their confidence, and obtain commitment to benefits realisation.

Meet the programme objectives and deliver the projected benefits

- Gain agreement to the programme objectives and the benefits to be delivered amongst stakeholders, including Ministers where appropriate;
- Understand the broader government perspective and its impact on the programme;
- Ensure the strategic fit of the programme objectives and the stated benefits;
- Agree a clear and simple approach to performance management and monitor delivery of the objectives and benefits taking appropriate action where necessary to ensure their successful delivery.

Develop the programme organisation and plan

- Design and implement a coherent organisation structure and an appropriately detailed programme plan;
- Build the right team, securing necessary resources and skills and providing clear lines of accountability;
- Provide appropriate support, steer and strategic focus to the Programme Director.

Monitor and take control of progress

- Monitor and control the progress of the programme at a strategic level, being honest and frank about project progress, risk and issues;
- Monitor benefits and ensure that any changes to the agreed programme stated benefits are flagged appropriately within programme governance and the Business Case is updated accordingly (throughout the programme life-cycle);
- Maintain the integrity of the programme and speak truth to power;
- Communicate effectively with senior stakeholders about programme progress and provide clear, appropriate and delivery-focused decisions and advice to the Programme Director.

Effective and appropriate problem resolution and referral processes

- Identify, understand and drive the successful mitigation of programme risks;
- Escalate serious issues quickly and with confidence to senior management and/or Ministers;
- Develop strong and effective engagement between programme teams and its stakeholders and sponsors;
- Ensure the communication processes are effective and that the programme's objectives and deliverables continue to be consistent with the organisation's strategic direction.

Ensure the programme is subject to review at appropriate stages

- Recognise the value of robust programme review and ensure it occurs at key points in the programme lifecycle, particularly at the pre-initiation (feasibility) and initiation stages;
- Make certain that any recommendations or concerns from reviews are met or addressed in a timely manner;
- In the event of a “red” or “amber-red” review, ensure the Permanent Secretary has been made aware of the situation and briefed accordingly.

Manage formal programme closure

- Formally close the programme documenting lessons learned with the final evaluation report and disseminate to stakeholders;
- Put plans in place for a post implementation review, agreeing this with your Programme Board and other relevant stakeholders;
- Agree a plan for both long term benefits realisation and on-going sustainability with key stakeholders as part of the process of moving to business as usual.