

TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF A PROVIDER GROUP MEETING **HELD ON THURSDAY 30TH NOVEMBER 2000**

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|-----------------|--------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Present: | Chris Clover | - | Training & Dev Officer, TMBC |
| | Steve Moss | - | New Charter Housing Trust |
| | Linda Walker | - | TMBC |
| | Annette Goodfellow | - | Tameside CAB |
| | Steve Asulime | - | Tameside Welfare Rights Unit |
| | Ruth Chessbrough | - | Welfare Rights Service, TMBC |
| | Joanne Hughes | - | Age Concern, Tameside |
| | Naomi O'Connor | - | Trading Standards & Consumer Services |
| | Dave Meakin | - | Trading Standards & Consumer Services |
| | Peter Holden | - | Thompson & Cooke, Solicitors |
| | Sue Sperry | - | Tameside Forum of Disabled People |
| | Denise Pinder | - | Bromley Hyde and Robinson |
| | Anthony Theakston | - | Rowlands |
| | Andrew Shanahan | - | Beevers Solicitors |
| | Julie Webster | - | Tameside County Court |
| | Gillian Williams | - | Tameside County Court |
| | Pam Tweedie | - | DIAL Tameside MBC |
| | Alan Franco | - | CLS Co-ordinator, TMBC |
| | Linda Walker | - | TMBC |
| | Michelle Brennan | - | Legal Services Commission |

Apologies: Jim Gourley, Mencap, Rowlands Solicitors, and Roz Hamilton, Probation Service

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th July 2000 were agreed.

2. Active Signposting and Referral Scheme Protocol

John Galvin (in the Chair) explained that the scheme had been in place for some months and asked providers for their views on how the process was working. Providers gave their experiences of operating the referral scheme and their concerns about the additional paperwork involved in making referrals. Michelle Brennan stated that provided effective monitoring and the quality mark requirements are being met, any suggestions for streamlining the process would be considered.

Steve Moss, Housing Aid Centre, reported that he was holding a training session in January and amongst other issues his staff would be considering the most efficient ways of monitoring referrals. He agreed to feedback any suggestions to providers.

3. Provider Directory

Feedback indicated providers felt the local directory was a useful document. Alan Franco had received some amendments and suggestions for improving presentation and these would be incorporated into the next edition.

Sue Sperry, Tameside Forum of Disabled People, asked if there was any intention to translate the directory into Braille. As the partnership had agreed to make information accessible to all Tameside residents any requests for the directory to be produced in an alternative format would be considered. Alan Franco agreed to look into Sue's request.

4. Website Development

Alan Franco gave details of the content of the Tameside website and plans for its expansion to give providers and the residents of Tameside more information about the work of the partnership. At this stage, it is likely to include details of the Strategic Plan, the mapping exercise which identified need, TMBC's work on social exclusion and other related issues. It is possible that providers with their own website can be linked directly to the Tameside CLS website. For further details or any suggestions for enhancements please contact Alan Franco.

5. Outreach Work

Michelle Brennan referred to the local consultation day on 26th July held jointly by the LSC and TMBC and stated that the Partnership had started to look at some of the key issues raised. One area of concern highlighted was the under performance of the housing contracts allocated to Tameside. It was suspected that this was not because of lack of need but related to lack of knowledge of services available and their accessibility to residents.

Michelle gave details of the setting up of the Duty Solicitor scheme at the County Court on rent repossession days. John Galvin also reported on the pilot project that had been running at the Housing Aid Centre for approximately a year and other schemes in local libraries and community centres. He explained that the local Provider Directory gave details of solicitors operating out of hours and home visiting services and there appeared to be a good spread across Tameside. Steve Moss suggested that the under performance in the housing contracts may have been affected by solicitors based outside the Borough undertaking disrepair work. He also referred to the service whereby people facing eviction were contacted by the Housing Aid Centre to offer support and advice. Annette Goodfellow, CAB, mentioned that although NCLB funding for the outreach project in Hattersley had ceased, CAB were still maintaining the service using core funding.

6. Strategic Plan

Michelle Brennan explained that the document was the first Strategic Plan to be produced by Tameside CLSP. As such it represents the starting point for developing a clear framework for the CLS locally. It should give funders and providers a better understanding of current supply and allow identification of gaps in provision. This will help the partnership to make recommendations about the need for funding of legal services at all levels and enable funders to target their resources more effectively. Providers noted the actions and recommendations set out in the report.

7. Consumer Services Network

Dave Meakin, Trading Standards, reported on a seminar he recently attended with Annette Goodfellow, CAB, aimed at organisations providing assistance in consumer

advice. This network has been set up by the DTI following the Government's White Paper that recommended the marketing of Trading Standards on a national scale. He stated that the network mirrored that of the CLSP's but relating to consumer contracts. It was anticipated that this network would initially be developed on a local basis.

8. Completion of Medical Reports

Annette Goodfellow queried if other providers were having problems obtaining medical reports from GPs. In order to assist the process she had devised a simple questionnaire and accompanying letter for GPs but at a recent case the tribunal had not accepted the information. Providers agreed to contact Annette with their experiences and to discuss a way forward.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 29th March 2001.