

TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF A PROVIDER GROUP MEETING **HELD ON TUESDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2001**

Present:	Pam Tweedie	-	Dial Tameside
	Anne Hardy	-	Beevers Solicitors
	Julia Bentley	-	Trading Standards & Consumer Services, TMBC
	Marie-Claire Lee	-	Tameside Carers Centre
	Nazrul Hoque	-	Exchequer & Customer Services, TMBC
	Kevin Johnson	-	Tameside Witness & Victim Support
	Roger Thompson	-	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Bill Hackwell	-	Hackwell Ashworth & Co Solicitors
	Wendy Buckley	-	Pluck Andew & Co Solicitors
	Gill Williams	-	Tameside County Court
	Philip Jones	-	Library Service, TMBC
	Annette Goodfellow	-	Tameside CAB
	Elaine Fiveash	-	Child Protection, T&G C&PS Trust
	Michelle Brennan	-	Planning & Partnership Consultant, LSC
	Alan Franco	-	CLS Co-ordinator, TMBC
	Linda Walker	-	Partnership Secretary, TMBC
Apologies:	Jim Gourley	-	Ashton and District MENCAP
	Andrew Shanahan	-	Beevers Solicitors
	Diana Johnson	-	Probation Service
	Richard Goodall	-	Gruber Garratt Solicitors
	Heather Hazelhurst	-	Benefits Agency
	Rowlands Solicitors		

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the proceedings of the previous meeting held on 2nd October 2001 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Partnership Innovation Budget

Further to Minute 3 of the previous meeting, Alan Franco announced that the Partnership had been successful in securing funds for two projects under the Partnership Innovation Budget:

- ***Mental Health and Money Advice Workers***

A grant of £600,000 had been awarded over a period of 3 years to develop a partnership with the Mental Health Service to provide debt advice and early intervention work. It was noted that this grant was the biggest single success in the PIB list nationally. The project would commence in April 2002 and the workers would be based in the Council's Welfare Rights Service. Elizabeth Simpson and her colleagues in Welfare Rights were thanked for their work on the development of this bid. A number of other partnerships had received

funding to develop services in the mental health field and Birmingham University would also be looking at social welfare issues and people with mental health problems. The merits of linking up with other successful bids was discussed.

- ***Welfare Benefits Take-up Project***

This joint project with the Salford CLSP to increase access to advice services specifically in the field of benefits advice to people over 60 years, had been awarded a grant of £215,000 over a 2 year period. The project will develop, implement and review two separate take-up campaigns in Salford and Tameside CLSPs and these will be tested against a similar “High Street” provider.

Alan Franco and Michelle Brennan agreed to keep providers informed of developments with these projects.

3. Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme

Gill Williams gave an update on the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme. By way of example, Gill stated that the court would usually list about 140 cases in a day with perhaps 10 people turning up. The meeting was pleased to note that at the last session approximately 100 people attended with 9 seeking help prior to the court date. This number of clients had proved difficult to manage logistically but the Court was reviewing its procedures. A review meeting of those involved was scheduled to take place shortly.

Michelle Brennan reported on the tender for the LSC funded scheme and a decision on those schemes shortlisted would be notified in early November with schemes beginning in January.

4. Survey of Welfare Benefits Advice Provision

Michelle Brennan stated that a survey would be conducted to ascertain those agencies who provide help in completing benefit forms and those agencies who provide representation at appeal tribunals. It was agreed that a pro forma would be sent to providers for completion.

Concern was expressed about the difficulties clients were having in obtaining forms for crisis loans from the Benefits Agency. It was noted that a Benefits Agency Customer Service Conference would be held on 4th October and providers attending agreed to raise this issue at the conference.

5. Beacon Council Bid

Alan Franco outlined the Beacon Status Scheme the aim of which was to identify centres of excellence in local government from which other councils could learn. Councils were invited to apply under a number of themes each year. Community Legal Service was one of the themes for 2002 and the Partnership would be submitting an application for Beacon Status by the end of October.

Alan Franco went on to describe the procedure for shortlisting and the involvement of providers in this process.

6. Mental Health Awareness Training

Alan Franco reported that Ros Whysall, who had recently been appointed as Co-ordinator of Mental Health Awareness Training at Mind, would be attending the next meeting to explain her role and discuss training issues.

7. Consumer Support Network – Update

Julia Bentley, Trading Standards and Consumer Advice, updated the meeting on the development of the Consumer Support Network. A start up meeting would be held on 4th October 2001 to which interested parties had been invited to attend. The initial results of a recent Citizen 2000 Panel Survey had identified gaps in publicising services and this would need to be addressed. The next stage would be to produce a Network Development Plan and formulate Terms of Reference.

8. Strategic Plan 2002-2005

Michelle Brennan informed providers that the final version of the Strategic Plan for 2002-2005 would be published at the end of October. She thanked providers for their contributions.

9. Steering Group – Terms of Reference

Michelle Brennan reported that the Partnership's Steering Group was reviewing its Terms of Reference and Membership. Tameside and Glossop Law Society had recently nominated Andrew Shanahan of Beevers Solicitors as their representative. Michelle agreed to write to providers inviting nominations for a representative from the Not for Profit Sector.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 11th December 2001.