

## **TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP**

### **MINUTES OF A PROVIDER GROUP MEETING** **HELD ON TUESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2002**

<b>Present:</b>	Pam Tweedie	-	Dial Tameside
	Andrew Shanahan	-	Beevers Solicitors
	Julia Bentley	-	Trading Standards & Consumer Services, TMBC
	Ray Slamon	-	Tameside Carers Centre
	Nazrul Hoque	-	Exchequer & Customer Services, TMBC
	Kath Jarratt	-	Tameside Witness & Victim Support
	Roger Thompson	-	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Wendy Buckley	-	Pluck Andew & Co Solicitors
	Gill Williams	-	Tameside County Court
	Philip Jones	-	Library Service, TMBC
	Annette Goodfellow	-	Tameside CAB
	Alan Franco	-	CLS Co-ordinator, TMBC
	Steve Moss	-	NCHT
	Karen Dey	-	Tameside Advocacy Project
	Louise Carter	-	Tameside Advocacy Project
	Elizabeth Simpson	-	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Ruth Cheesbrough	-	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	M Evan	-	Rowlands Solicitors
	Michelle Brennan	-	Planning & Partnership Consultant, LSC
	Ahmed Ali	-	TREC
	Linda Walker	-	Partnership Secretary, TMBC
<b>Apologies:</b>	Jim Gourley	-	Ashton and District MENCAP
	Diana Johnson	-	Probation Service
	Brenda Moran	-	Probation Service
	Judith Burrows	-	Tameside Magistrates Court
	Martin Goodsell	-	Shelter

#### **1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2001 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **2. BEACON COUNCIL APPLICATION**

Alan Franco gave details of the background to the recent application for Beacon status. An assessment team had visited Tameside on 14<sup>th</sup> January to look at the development of the partnership and a delegation from Tameside had visited London for an assessment. Tameside was one of 8 authorities that the Government had recently announced as being successful in achieving Beacon Status under the Community Legal Service Theme. He indicated that over the next 12 months Tameside would be expected to work with the other 7 local authorities to hold dissemination events to share good practice with other local authorities and partnerships.

Alan Franco passed on the thanks of the Council to all those who had contributed to the development of the Tameside partnership. On behalf of the Provider Network, Ahmed Ali, expressed thanks to Alan for his support to organisations and contribution to the success of the partnership. It was noted that TREC had recently achieved CLS Quality Mark status and had also been successful in their bid to become a Centre of Excellence.

### **3. ADVOCACY PROJECTS IN TAMESIDE**

#### **(a) Tameside Advocacy Project**

Karen Dey and Louise Carter from the Tameside Advocacy Project gave details of the service based in Chester Square, Ashton-under-Lyne which supports and provides information to allow people to make realistic choices regarding their treatment and care. The project is jointly funded by Health and Social Services. It is available to service users on the wards of the mental health unit at Tameside General Hospital (Day hospital service users with an enhanced care plan in place). There is also a service for older people and Hyde day hospital. The projects aims to support people with:

- Ward rounds
- Mental Health Review Tribunals (MHRT)
- Discharge Meetings
- Home Leave arrangements
- Medication issues
- Complaints Procedures

Ahmed Ali welcomed the development of this project and asked about linkages with the ethnic minority population. Karen and Louise confirmed that they had met recently with a member of the Pro-Caribbean Project and contact had been made with other groups and specialist services to look at the developing role of advocates.

In response to a question from Michelle Brennan, it was noted that publicity for the project was displayed on notice boards at the hospital. The advocates also have a physical presence on the wards and links with the hospital administrator who deals with tribunals.

Michelle also commented that access to justice for people with mental health issues within the community falls within the remit of Community Legal Service and referred to the successful PIB bid project in Tameside which extends to money advice and also the involvement of Shelter in this project.

#### **(b) Other Advocacy Projects in Tameside MBC**

Annette Goodfellow reported on two advocacy projects within the CAB. An independent advocacy service for older people in residential care and nursing care had been in existence since 1995. The project has two full time advocates who receive referrals from Social Services, relatives and staff working in the homes.

The Community Care Advocacy Project provides a service for older people in receipt of a complex care package in a home care setting. The project is time limited and funding is due to cease in June 2002. There is one part time advocate and referrals are received from a variety of services.

Annette also referred to a number of other advocacy projects available within the Borough, information on which appeared to be limited. Annette referred to a questionnaire she had devised and suggested that this be distributed to those organisations with projects in place in order that a small leaflet could be published listing details of all projects. The questionnaire would be distributed with copies of the minutes.

#### **4. MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING**

Alan Franco reported on arrangements being made for mental health awareness training sessions. Ros Whysall, who gave a presentation to the last meeting, had agreed to provide two initial training sessions free of charge. Members of the provider group would be receiving an invite to these introductory sessions once arrangements had been finalised.

#### **5. PARTNERSHIP INNOVATION BUDGET PROJECTS**

##### **(a) Welfare Benefits Take Up Project for Older People**

Ruth Cheesbrough, Welfare Rights Service, TMBC, distributed copies of an update report and monitoring form for information. It was noted that the project was aiming to visit all housing benefit/council tax rebate claimants who appear to be missing out on their entitlement to minimum income guarantee, as well as helping with attendance allowance claims on request.

The project was also visiting sheltered housing complexes (one per month) in partnership with the Benefits Agency, Tameside housing benefits and CAB staff. A customer feedback form was being sent at the close of each case and so far some very appreciative comments have been received from customers.

##### **(b) Mental Health – Debt and Money Advice Project**

Elizabeth Simpson, Welfare Rights Service, TMBC, gave a verbal report to the meeting. She stated that work had concentrated on staff recruitment and it was anticipated that the senior and two money advice workers would be in post by the end of May. Arrangements were in hand to readvertise for 2 further money advice workers.

Elizabeth stated that the first priorities for the service would be to make contact with the Mental Health Service and build up partnership working and also to provide awareness training and distribute leaflets promoting the service. The setting up of advice sessions would also be a priority.

#### **6. HOUSING POSSESSION COURT DUTY SCHEME**

Andrew Shanahan reported that the pilot had been running since January 2002 in conjunction with Shelter and CAB. He stated that the scheme was progressing well for both rent and mortgage repossessions. From the County Court point of view, Gill Williams, indicated that there were no major issues at the moment. Publicity leaflets were in the process of being amended to encourage people to arrive at court half an hour in advance to enable the duty solicitor to be aware of all the relevant facts.

Steve Moss, NCHT, highlighted issues with private landlords particularly around problems with the granting of 6 months assured tenancies. Steve stated that a large number of people who visited the Housing Aid Centre were being asked to leave properties after 6 months and in some cases this could be the result of a short fall in housing benefit. Alan Franco and Michelle Brennan agreed to speak to the Housing Strategy Group as a way forward.

## **7. SURVEY OF WELFARE BENEFITS ADVICE PROVISION PROGRESS REPORT**

An initial summary showing details of those organisations providing assistance in completing DLA and AA forms and providing representation at tribunal was distributed and discussed.

## **8. ADVICE SESSIONS – HYDE CLINIC**

Michelle Brennan reported that the 11 clinics in Tameside had achieved Quality Mark status as information points and during a recent consultation meeting a suggestion was made that the clinics could be used as outreach points for advice sessions. Wendy Buckley, Pluck Andrew Solicitors, reported on the sessions commencing at Hyde Clinic on a Monday afternoon. A flyer promoting this service was distributed and Ahmed Ali felt it would be useful to have the leaflet translated into other languages.

The issue of interpreter and language services was discussed and it was felt there was a need to seek the views of the Steering Group on the provision of this service.