

TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF A PROVIDER GROUP MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 8th MARCH 2005

Present:	Annette Goodfellow	Tameside CAB (in the Chair)
	Dorothy Eades	Tameside Welfare Rights Service
	Carol Eckersley	Tameside & Pension Service Joint Team
	Patricia Deaville	Pluck Andrew and Co
	Jim Gourley	MENCAP
	Karen Heathcote	Tameside Libraries
	Becky Jackson	Tameside Womens Project
	Lisa Jackson	New Charter Housing Trust
	Nramdi Inegbu	Parker Bird
	Irfan Munir	Bromley, Hyde and Robinson
	Alistair Newton	Consumer Advice, TMBC
	Roger Thompson	Tameside Welfare Rights Service
	Linda Walker	Partnership Secretary, TMBC
Apologies:	Alan Franco	TMBC
	Andrew Shanahan	Beevers Solicitors
	Judith Burrows	Tameside Magistrates Court
	Michelle Neville-Cooper	Tameside Exchequer Services
	Ian Metcalfe	Probation Service
	Alison Heylin	Rogerson Galvin
	Pat Purcell	Tameside Information Service

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 7th December 2004, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Item 4(b) – Debt advice Provision – Lisa Jackson advised that the Collections Policy developed by New Charter Housing Trust was available for the Provider Group and Annette Goodfellow had made contact with Exchequer Services and was awaiting a response.

Item 5 – Homelessness Forum – Karen Heathcote advised that she had received the Directory of Temporary Accommodation to be included in the Tameside Library Service database.

Item 6 – Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation and Religion or Belief) Regulations – Annette Goodfellow reported that a launch event had been arranged for 26th April 2005 and further details would follow from Ahmed Ali at TREC.

3. TAMESIDE COMMUNITY RADIO

Simon Walker gave a presentation which explained the potential for Tameside Community Radio. This was a new tier of local radio being introduced primarily for social gain rather than profit, serving the local community and providing opportunities including marketing public services and promoting the voluntary and community

sector. Following its recent submission of an application for a full time license, the results of which was expected in May/June 2005, Tameside Community Radio was concentrating on building contacts and raising awareness. It was noted that community radio would be funded 50% by advertising and 50% from the public purse which was likely to be for training and access work. Tameside Community Radio had undertaken a successful 28 day trial restricted service license which had attracted 60 volunteers from a range of community groups and organisations.

Discussion ensued on the type of information which could be promoted such as welfare benefits and trading standards/consumer information and the process for recording message, the possibility of conducting live interviews and editorial control.

The Chair wished Tameside Community Radio well with its application.

4. WELFARE BENEFITS ADVICE IN TAMESIDE

Roger Thompson and Dorothy Eades circulated a summary of the work being undertaken by Tameside MBC Welfare Rights Service. They advised that there were seven full time Welfare Rights Officers who had opened 811 new casework files and generated £2,438,088 for the Tameside economy during the period 1st April 2004 to 28th February 2005. In addition the telephone advice line had dealt with 2295 enquiries and 20 formal sessions had delivered benefits training to 180 people during this period. Areas of concern were highlighted as follows:

- Difficulties negotiating with the Tax Credit Office in Preston which was also being experienced throughout greater Manchester area.
- Concerns regarding the conduct of some tribunal panels and difficulties representatives had in advocating on behalf of their clients.

Annette Goodfellow also circulated statistics relating to the issues dealt with by the "core" service from 1st April 2004 to 31st December 2004 and specialist welfare benefits caseworkers from 1st April 2004 to 28th February 2005 at the Citizens Advice Bureau. Specific areas of concern which had arisen during the course of this work were noted as follows:

- Delays in receiving Statement of Reasons from the DWP.
- Lack of replies to appeals lodged in relation to Working Tax Credits.
- More difficult to access Crisis Loans via the telephone system now in operation.
- Difficulty in dealing with Inland Revenue in relation to the overpayment of Tax Credits.
- Confusion about whether the DWP reconsiders decisions when new evidence is submitted.
- Advisers felt that the Record of Proceedings from the Appeals Service did not reflect the actual proceedings.

Discussions ensued on the above matters and providers shared their experiences. In terms of future discussions involving issues relating to the DWP it was agreed to extend an invitation to a DWP representative to attend the meeting. Carol Eckersley to provide Annette Goodfellow with details of a contact.

5. TAMESIDE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The meeting considered the Partnership Agreement and Performance Indicators which had been distributed with the agenda and indicated their support for the contents of the Partnership Agreement. In terms of the Performance Indicators, the Chair asked if providers could give consideration to any other indicators which could usefully be included.

6. TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE STEERING GROUP

The meeting was advised of the items considered at the Steering Group meeting held on 10th February 2005 which included:

- Mental Health Money Advice Project – award of LSC contract to continue this project from June 2005
- Contract Performance – Pluck Andrew to be invited to give a presentation at the September meeting of the Provider Group regarding their involvement in the Family Advice and Information Network.
- Tameside Strategic Partnership – partnership agreement and performance indicators
- Strategic Plan 2005/08 – final draft and review of action plan
- Publicity material

7. MEDIATION SERVICES

The Chair advised that a new mediation service between young people and their parents would be available from the Housing Options Centre.

8. CONSUMER SUPPORT NETWORK

Alistair Newton advised that there was approximately £1,500 remaining of a grant to publicise Consumer Advice Services. The Consumer Support Network would be arranging a meeting to consider how this could be allocated. It was noted that a small display and leaflets would be available at the next meeting for information.

He added that the next edition of the Tameside Citizen would include information about the “Top Ten Scams” and asked if providers could pass any information if their clients had been affected.

9. TAMESIDE MBC AND PENSION SERVICE JOINT TEAM

Carol Eckersley gave an outline of the work of the Joint Team which offered support to vulnerable older people to ensure they received all the benefits they were entitled to and where appropriate, refer on to other services.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 14th June 2005 and would focus on employment matters.