

TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF A PROVIDER GROUP MEETING **HELD ON TUESDAY 14th June 2005**

Present:	Annette Goodfellow	Tameside CAB (in the Chair)
	Wendy Buckley	Pluck Andrew and Co
	Ruth Cheesbrough	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Karen Heathcote	Tameside Libraries
	Janet Hunt	Housing and Regeneration, TMBC
	Lesley Hunter	GM Low Pay Unit
	Peter Marland	Ashton Pioneer Homes
	Denise McDowell	GM Low Pay Unit
	Karen Morgan Hopwood	The Pension Service
	Irfan Munir	Bromley, Hyde and Robinson
	Alistair Newton	Consumer Advice, TMBC
	Steve Ogden	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Lorraine Pattison	Jobmatch
	Linda Walker	Partnership Secretary, TMBC
Apologies:	Alan Franco	TMBC
	Andrew Shanahan	Beevers Solicitors
	Michelle Neville-Cooper	Tameside Exchequer Services
	Alison Heylin	Rogerson Galvin
	Cath Fox/Margaret Knowles	Tameside Information Service
	Julie Vickers	NCHT
	Lynne Bainbridge	TMBC
	Julia Worthington	SPRINT Team

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Janet Hunt, Housing and Regeneration TMBC, Lorraine Pattison, Jobmatch and Peter Marland, Ashton Pioneer Homes, to this their first meeting of the Provider Group.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 8th March 2005, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Item 2 – Homelessness Forum – Karen Heathcote stated that the Directory of Temporary Accommodation was now included in the database of community groups and organisations accessible through the Council's website.

Item 2 – Debt Advice Provision – Annette Goodfellow reported that discussions were ongoing with Exchequer Services regarding a definitive collections policy. However, in the last six months the Council had been trying to recover Council Tax arrears via bankruptcy proceedings.

4. EMPLOYMENT ADVICE IN TAMESIDE

Denise McDowell and Lesley Hunter (Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit) and Annette Goodfellow (CAB) presented information about their respective employment advice services. The GMPLU was funded by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities to provide employment rights information, advice and support service across Greater Manchester and to conduct research into issues affecting the local labour market. The Unit provided a telephone casework advice service and employed two full time advice workers. In the last financial year they had dealt with 2332 new callers from the Greater Manchester area, 191 of which were from Tameside residents (about 8% of total calls). Approximately 23% of calls from Tameside related to parental rights such as maternity, paternity and adoptive leave with 12% of enquiries relating to sickness absence. It was noted that 40% of all calls across Greater Manchester about home working were from Tameside residents. These figures related to first time callers and did not include follow up calls which could lead to representation at employment tribunals. The Unit had produced a number of fact sheets on statutory rights which were also available on their website (www.gmplpu.org.uk).

Denise McDowell explained that the GMLPU had recently undergone an AGMA review which had resulted in a change in focus for the Unit which presented opportunities to become involved in new projects. For example, developing the Unit's involvement in more face to face work in specialist areas such as employment rights for people with mental health problems. Denise also gave details of a pilot on line video link and would advise on its outcomes in due course. Consultations were due to take place regarding the renaming of the GMLPU to reflect this new direction.

Annette Goodfellow advised that the CAB employed one full time caseworker. She circulated information which gave a breakdown of the 170 cases which were opened in the period 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005. Only three of these cases went through to a full tribunal as the majority of clients had a preference for settling their case through negotiation. The employment adviser had obtained a total of £72,168 for clients where tribunal action had commenced and cases were settled. Unfortunately, when a client is awarded a sum at a tribunal this is not guaranteed to be paid and in four cases, County Court action had been commenced in order to enforce the award.

A joint GMIAU and Tameside CAB poster/flyer had been produced a copy of which would be circulated with the minutes.

5. TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE STEERING GROUP

The meeting was advised of the items considered at the Steering Group meeting held on 12th May 2005 which included:

- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy Presentation – The Tame Valley Partnership and New Charter Housing Trust had jointly funded a CAB generalist advice service (one day per week) on the Acresfield Road site in Hyde.
- Contract Performance – The Steering Group was satisfied with contract performance in Tameside.
- Tameside Strategic Partnership – Report to Board and Partnership Agreement
- Action Plan 2005/08
- Mental Health Money Advice Project – LSC contract awarded

6. CONSUMER SUPPORT NETWORK

Alistair Newton advised that a new Consumer Direct telephone advice service for the Greater Manchester area would commence in December 2005. He also circulated copies of the "Getting Connected" – Consumer Support Network newsletter. Copies of the advice pack on consumer law were still available if required.

7. CLS NORTH WEST DIRECTORY

Karen Heathcote advised that a hard copy of the CLS North West Directory of organisations was no longer available although a cdrom version was being considered. A summary of the local directory had been produced for voluntary organisations and it was agreed to look at the feasibility of wider circulation of this document.

8. JOBMATCH – WORK EXPERIENCE

Lorraine Patterson explained the role of Jobmatch Employment Services, part of Tameside Social Care and Health, which helped people with a disability find employment. Work placements provided a valuable opportunity for those seeking employment to experience a variety of placements which helped to gain skills. Lorraine stated that she would be very pleased to hear from any organisation willing to offer a work experience placement opportunity.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 6th September 2005 and would focus on both the Immigration and Consumer subject areas.