

# TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

## MINUTES OF A PROVIDER GROUP MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005

<b>Present:</b>	Alan Franco	CLS Co-ordinator, TMBC
	Ruth Cheesbrough	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Beate Dasarathy	GMIAU
	Patricia Deaville	Pluck Andrew and Co, Ashton
	Sarah Evans	Housing Options Centre
	Stephanie Fearn	Joint Pension Team, TMBC
	Melanie Fraser	Housing Options Centre
	Annette Goodfellow	Tameside CAB (in the Chair)
	Jim Gourley	Mencap
	Janet Hunt	Housing and Regeneration, TMBC
	Jules Mambu	Tameside African Refuge Association
	Steve Ogden	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Lorraine Pattison	Jobmatch
	Gillian Rees	TMBC
	Andrew Shanahan	Beevers Solicitors
	Farah Shaikh	Customer Services, TMBC
	Ray Slamon	Tameside Carers Centre
	Jackie Taylor	Mental Health Team, Wilshaw House
	Roger Thompson	Welfare Rights Service, TMBC
	Julie Vickers	New Charter Housing Trust
	Linda Walker	Partnership Secretary, TMBC
<b>Apologies:</b>	Karen Heathcote	Tameside Libraries
	Manilal Mistry	TREC
	Katherine McCullagh	Parkerbird
	Gill Williams	Tameside County Court

### 1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

### 2. MATTERS ARISING

#### ***Item 4 – Employment Advice in Tameside***

It was noted that the Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit would be moving offices and new contact details were given as follows:

Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Swan Buildings  
20 Swan Street  
Manchester, M4 5JW  
Tel: 0161 839 3882  
Fax: 0161 839 3883  
Advice Line: 0161 839 3888

### **3. IMMIGRATION LAW ADVICE IN TAMESIDE**

Beate Dasarathy, GMIAU, advised that the Unit had been in existence since the early 90's providing expert advice and legal representation on all issues of immigration, nationality and asylum. Funding was primarily received from the Legal Services Commission and also grants from three Greater Manchester local authorities, namely, Manchester, Tameside and Bury.

Beate gave details of the services provided by the Unit which included a "drop in" advice service and telephone advice line. She stated that the outreach surgery at the Council Offices, Ashton, was proving very successful and well used dealing with a range of issues including entitlement to nationality, European and asylum law and entrance visas. The Unit also worked closely with Manchester Airport and its Detention Suite and also increasingly with prisons as recent amendments to the Immigration Act have criminalised certain aspects of those seeking asylum who are entering the country on false documentation. Second tier support was also provided to other advice agencies such as Citizens Advice and Refugee Action.

Discussion ensued relating to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) which provided support, accommodation and financial help to asylum seekers whilst their claim was being considered. The consequences of the withdrawal of this support Under Section 9 of the Immigration Act 1971 was also discussed. It was noted that Manchester City Council had reached a view that once Section 9 support had been withdrawn they would put in place a strategy to keep the family together. Annette Goodfellow reported on a potential bid from Rochdale, Tameside and Oldham CABs to provide mentoring to those who had achieved refugee status and unfortunately find themselves in a similar position having had their support withdrawn. In order to clarify matters, a statement on the policy contained under Section 9 and how Tameside would address issues of support to refugees if this was withdrawn would be distributed to the Provider Group.

In response to a request for support from Jules Mambu for asylum seekers visiting the Tameside African Refugee Association, the Chair advised that he would ensure that the Asylum Support Team would make contact with TARA.

### **4. BOGUS DOORSTEP TRADERS**

Debbie Murray, Community Safety Unit, and Gwen Kay, Trading Standards, gave a presentation regarding Tameside's approach to tackling doorstep crime. National research had indicated that the level of this type of crime was higher than was first thought and local authorities were asked to consider ways of tackling this problem. In response, Tameside's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and its partner agencies had launched a three year project aimed at raising awareness including talks to community groups, staff training, taking referrals and visiting vulnerable people in the community to provide advice and free additional security products such as Identislot to help prevent distraction burglaries.

Further work was being undertaken on producing a cold calling protocol and looking at the ways in which organisations such as the utilities, banks and the local authority, communicate with members of the public. In particular, it was noted that the local authority practice was to write to members of the public to inform them of the date and time that an officer would be visiting their property.

The Chair thanked Debbie and Gwen for their informative presentation and providers were requested to take this message back to their organisations and to sign up to the cold calling protocol when this was finalised. They were also asked to consider including leaflets regarding bogus traders in their communications with members of the public.

## **5. “MAKING LEGAL RIGHTS A REALITY”**

The Chair referred to a leaflet which provided a summary of “Making Legal Rights a Reality: The Legal Services Commission’s Strategy for the Community Legal Service. Volume one: A Consultation Paper”. The LSC, on behalf of the Government, was proposing to review the operation of publicly funded legal advice services across the country and two key proposals of interest were highlighted as follows:

- Piloting Community Legal and Advice Centres (CLACs) in the most deprived communities, where clients would be able to get legal help for a range of social welfare problems.
- Piloting Community Legal Advice Networks (CLANs), using the joined-up approach proposed for the centres in areas where a good network of service providers already existed.

It was also noted that the LSC had organised a consultation event which would be held on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2005 where more detailed information regarding the proposals would be available. It was likely that national organisations would be responding to these consultations and it was agreed to circulate these responses to keep members of the Provider Group informed of the debate. In terms of Tameside, there was a possibility that the partnership would be considered as a candidate for a CLAN particularly as advice agencies in the area had demonstrated successful partnership working on a number of projects including the County Court Duty Scheme and Benefit Take-up.

## **6. TAMESIDE CLSP STEERING GROUP AND PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Alan Franco reported that the main item for consideration for the Steering Group had been the Partnership’s relationship to the Tameside Strategic Partnership and a number of performance indicators were considered. The following key points were noted:

- Pension Credit Guarantee claimants was continuing to rise.
- Attendance Allowance claimants had remained static.
- Council Tax Benefit claimants had decreased slightly.
- Pension Credit claimants was gradually increasing.

Mr Gourley asked if there was any information available which indicated the number of people over 80 years of age who did not take up benefits and what action was being taken to encourage people to claim these benefits. Mention was made of the work of the Joint Team which had been established between Tameside MBC and the Pension Service with the aim of visiting every pensioner household in the Borough to encourage take up of benefit entitlement.

## **7. PREFERRED SUPPLIER SCHEME**

It was noted that Pluck Andrew and Co had participated in an LSC pilot project with the aim of establishing more efficient and effective ways of working with service providers for mutual benefit and for the benefit of clients and were now classed as a preferred supplier.

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and discussions would focus on both housing and debt matters with presentations on the Family Advice and Information Network, the role of the Children’s Centres and a progress report on the County Court Duty Scheme.