

# TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

## PROVIDER GROUP MEETING

19<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Commenced: 2.35 pm

Terminated: 3.55 pm

Present:	Alan Franco	-	CLS Co-ordinator (TMBC) (in the Chair)
	Ahmed Ali	-	TREC
	Yvonne Cartey	-	Economic Development Unit, TMBC
	Annette Goodfellow	-	Tameside CAB
	Karen Heathcote	-	Library Service, TMBC
	Richard Helmn	-	GM Immigration Aid Unit
	Lesley Hunter	-	GMPERAS
	Lisa Jones	-	Victim Support and Witness Service
	Gwen Kay	-	Trading Standards, TMBC
	Denise Pinder	-	Bromley Hyde and Robinson
	Julie Vickers	-	New Charter Housing Trust
	Gill Williams	-	Tameside County Court
	Linda Walker	-	Partnership Secretary
Apologies	Sarah Bartram	-	Parker Bird
For Absence:	Wendy Buckley	-	Pluck Andrew and Co
	Caroline Gregory	-	Neighbourhood Renewal, TMBC
	Karen Morgan-Hopwood	-	Tameside/Pension Service Joint Team
	Anne Okwei	-	Sure Start
	Carol Renshaw	-	Tameside/Pension Service Joint Team
	Andrew Shanahan	-	Beevers Solicitors

### 1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2007, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

### 2. EMPLOYMENT ADVICE

#### ***Greater Manchester Pay and Employment Rights Service***

Lesley Hunter, Employment Rights Advisor, stated that Greater Manchester Pay and Employment Rights Service (GMPERAS) provided employment rights information, advice and support services across Greater Manchester through a free, confidential, telephone advice service. In the last financial year, approximately 2500 people contacted the advice line and the Service had assisted 160 residents from Tameside (6.5%). The top four queries related to the following matters:

- Breaches of contracts of employment
- Holiday entitlement
- Parental rights
- Unfair dismissal

GMPERAS also produced an extensive range of fact sheets and leaflets relating to aspects of employment law details of which could be found on the website at [www.gmemploymentrights.org.uk](http://www.gmemploymentrights.org.uk). The service also offered second tier advice and training to generalist agencies in the Greater Manchester area, the most recent of which related to age discrimination and was attended by a number of officers from the Tameside area.

Work was currently focused on a review for the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities who provide funding for the Service and in September 2007 a new project would be commencing to advise victims of domestic violence who may also be experiencing problems at work. It was also noted that the Government was intending to repeal the dispute regulations, the consultation period for which closed on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2007. GMPERAS had responded and included a suggestion that the Government establish a department similar to the old wages council from which employers and employees could obtain advice on their statutory rights which may prevent claims reaching the tribunal stage.

### ***Tameside Citizens Advice Bureau***

Annette Goodfellow, District Manager, advised that in the financial year 2006/07 Tameside CAB employed a full time employment specialist caseworker. However, since April 2007 Tameside CAB had given up their Legal Services Commission contract and now employed a part time employment caseworker. This caseworker deals with specialist employment issues and the volunteer advisers provide assistance at the generalist advice level.

In 2006/07 the specialist caseworker dealt with 165 complex cases and 197 less complex cases on a range of different aspects of social policy the largest of which related to dispute resolutions. The Bureau was continuing to deal with enquiries where there was a potential unfair dismissal but employers had dismissed their employees before their first years continuous employment was completed and no special circumstances applied. Advisers were also dealing with equal pay claims which had been uncovered but where the client had left the workplace for longer than the employment tribunal claim deadline.

### **AGREED**

**That the reports be noted.**

## **3. CONSUMER ADVICE AND TRADING STANDARDS**

Gwen Kay, Trading Standards, TMBC, provided an update on the operation of the Consumer Direct call centre in Cumbria, operated by the Office of Fair Trading. Where Consumer Direct could not resolve an issue or further help was required the matter would be referred to the local Trading Standards office. It was noted that certain situations such as doorstep crime, allegations of unsafe goods such as mini motorbikes or counterfeit goods were referred for immediate attention.

In addition to the introduction of Consumer Direct, a note was also circulated which highlighted a number of other achievements over the last twelve months including the inspection of business premises, test purchasing, prosecutions and joint operations/visits carried out with other agencies.

### **AGREED**

**That the report be noted.**

## **4. PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Consideration was given to the Partnership's performance indicators and it was noted that in recent months there had been a significant increase in the number of County Court possession summonses issued for mortgages. Gill Williams, Tameside County Court, advised that in terms of arrears in many cases these were relatively small as they related to defaults on second loans secured on properties. Whilst the position in Tameside reflected the national trend, the situation would be monitored. Gill stated that she would ascertain if there was any further data which could be provided from the County Court.

Information relating to benefits was unavailable due to a new format being introduced which matched the Local Area Agreement.

The possibility of arranging for an insolvency practitioner to provide a training session on bankruptcy and insolvency issues for interested members of the group was discussed.

**5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Provider Group would be held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2007 and the themes would be Immigration and Discrimination.