

## TAMESIDE COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

### PROVIDER GROUP MEETING

16<sup>th</sup> September 2008

**Commenced:** 2.30 pm **Terminated:** 3.40 pm

**Present:**

Janine Yates	TMBC Welfare Rights Service (in the Chair)
Stephanie Booth	Tameside Libraries Information Service
Heather Bowery	PALS
Dave Burdis	MINT
Eden Carruthers	TMBC Adult Services – Public Information
Yvonne Cartey	TMBC Economic Development Unit
Stephanie Fearn	TMBC & Pension Service Joint Team
Jackie Gray	People First
John Hughes	TMBC Housing Strategy
Howard Lomas	Housing Options
Denise McDowell	GMIAU
Carol Renshaw	TMBC & Pension Service Joint Team
Susan Riley	Tameside CAB
Linda Walker	Partnership Secretary
Janine Wright	TMBC Housing Support

**Apologies for Absence:**

Ahmed Ali	Equality & Diversity Centre of Excellence
Noleen Beswick	TMBC Community Mental Health Services
Ruth Cheesbrough	TMBC Welfare Rights Service
Ilys Cookson	TMBC, Assistant Executive Director (Exchequer & Support Services)
Alan Franco	TMBC CLS Co-ordinator
Caroline Gregory	TMBC Neighbourhood Renewal
Karen Morgan-Hopwood	TMBC & Pension Service Joint Team
Alistair Newton	Tameside Trading Standards
Anne Okwei	Area Manager, Children's Centres
Ray Slamon	Tameside Carers Centre
Helen Stonehouse	Tameside Carers Centre
Shelley Timpson	Tameside Carers Centre
Julie Vickers	NCHT
Gill Williams	Tameside County Court

#### 1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2008, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

#### 2. IMMIGRATION AND DISCRIMINATION

##### *Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit*

Denise McDowell, Director of the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, stated the Unit advised and represented clients in immigration, asylum and nationality law matters. This service was provided for free to those who qualified for assistance under the Legal Help scheme. In terms of Tameside, residents could access the service at the Crumpsall office or through the outreach

service in Ashton-under-Lyne on the first Tuesday of each month between 10.00 am and 12.30 pm and the third Tuesday of each month between 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm on an appointment basis. The Unit also provided second tier advice and training to other agencies and were in the process of arranging a workshop regarding fresh asylum claims.

The impact of new funding arrangements introduced by the Legal Services Commission was making it increasingly more difficult for many asylum seekers to access legal aid and had led to some organisations relinquishing their contracts to provide immigration advice. This was having a significant impact on voluntary organisations and charities who were having difficulties absorbing the consequences of an increasing number of clients. Lack of access to proper legal advice was also contributing to the refusal of asylum claims which had resulted in an increase in the number of people becoming destitute.

Discussion took place regarding the policy on immigration and migration which was becoming harsher, the impact of which was being felt by more and more people creating a sense of uncertainty and fear. Examples were given of some families who had been settled in the country for some time but were now in crisis as they were discovering that their documentation was not in order and some refugees were also experiencing difficulties accessing health services.

### ***Tameside MBC Housing Strategy***

John Hughes, from Housing Strategy, advised that Tameside Council had ended its dispersal contract with the Home Office in 2006 although the Council still attended North West Consortium meetings which provided important information and data. He mentioned that in May 2008 there were 249 asylum seekers living in the Tameside area which appears a fairly consistent number. 64 asylum seekers were dispersed to Tameside with Section 4 support. This means that they have agreed to voluntarily return to their native country at a point in time. S95 cases accounted for 177 households and in most cases these would be families. Un-substantiated information suggested there may be approximately 22 single people who were currently destitute and had no recourse to public funds following failed asylum applications.

The Council has worked with local agencies to co-ordinate a response to asylum issues to try and prevent homelessness and particular reference was made to the Case Resolution Project. The Home Office had recently issued a consultation paper on how to go about supporting failed asylum seekers in the future as part of the Immigration and Citizenship Bill. Further details could be found on the Home Office website at [www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk)

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

Susan Riley, District Manager, circulated details which stated that the Bureau provided immigration advice at Level 1 and enquiries remained a fairly small proportion of the total issues upon which the Bureau advised, approximately 3% of all enquiries. Of the total immigration matters presented to the Bureau in 2007/08, 143 or 92% were via the generalist service open door session and the remainder were from outreach advice venues with the biggest number of enquiries from the Denton South area.

The Bureau had experienced a decrease in the number of asylum seekers and refugee issues from previous years although this continues to be the highest proportion of work undertaken within this area of advice. Other issues dealt with by the Bureau related to family dependents and partners and nationality and citizenship. Details of the fortnightly immigration sessions hosted by the Bureau and staffed by Rogerson Galvin were highlighted where most clients required one off specialist advice relating to asylum matters and visa issues. Work was also continuing with Oldham CAB on the production of a resource list for and promoting recruitment onto the 'Time Together Mentoring Scheme' for those granted refugee status in the Tameside and Oldham areas.

In terms of discrimination matters, in most cases it would be the advisers who would identify potential discrimination issues during the course of exploring a client's case. Case records showed

that potential discrimination had been identified in a number of advice areas by generalist advisers including education, travel, consumer, legal, employment, financial, health and housing. The Bureau had largely dealt with cases on the grounds of potential sex discrimination in employment, although identified potential discrimination in other forms. Other area of discrimination that were identified had been referred to external organisations such as Tameside’s Equality and Diversity Centre and Trafford Law Centre.

**AGREED**

**That the update report be noted.**

**3. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT – HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE**

Consideration was given to the following cumulative quarter four performance measures relating to increasing the incomes of older people which it was noted had exceeded their targets in terms of successful claims:

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Performance</b>
Disability Living Allowance/Attendance Allowance	519	722
Pension Credit	615	828
Council Tax Benefit	205	372

**AGREED**

**That the report be noted.**

**4. TACKLING INDEBTEDNESS IN TAMESIDE**

**(a) Tameside County Court Possession Summonses**

It was noted that there was a slight decrease in the number of mortgage possession summonses which had been issued but those issued for rent remained fairly static.

**(b) Council Tax Liability Orders**

The number of liability orders issued remained fairly stable with approximately 10,000 being issued each year.

**(c) Charging Orders**

Following recent discussions with the County Court statistics relating to the issue of charging orders placed on a debtor’s property for monies owed to a lender were given as follows:

<b>Year (Jan-Dec)</b>	<b>No of Charging Orders Issued</b>
2006	220
2007	355
2008 (to date)	342

**AGREED**

**That the report be noted.**

## 5. BUDGETING TRAINING

David Burdis, MINT, reported that he was in the process of organising budgeting training sessions at Refugee Action in October 2008.

## 6. DATES OF NEXT MEETING

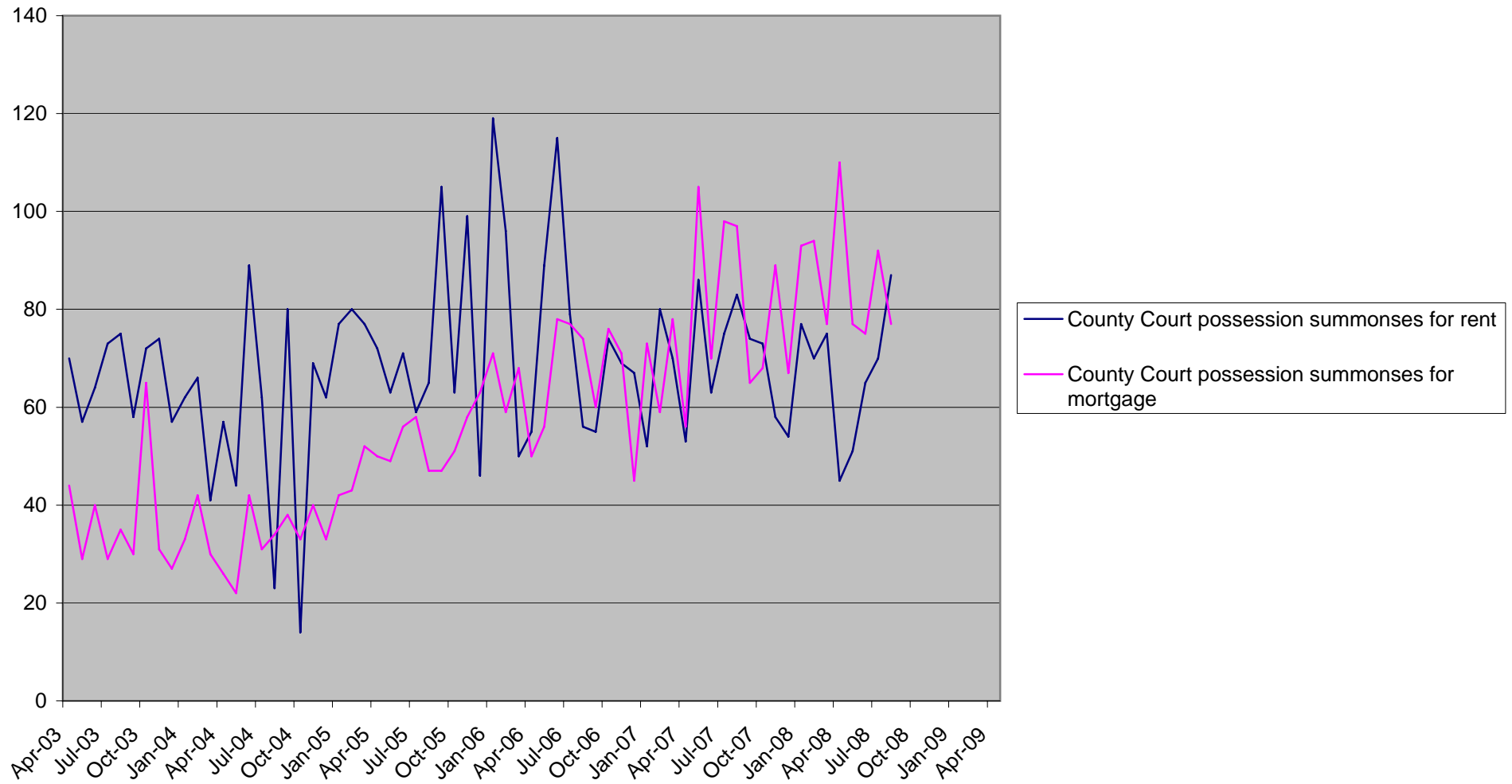
The date and theme for the next meeting was noted as follows:

Date	Theme (area of law)
16 <sup>th</sup> December 2008	(i) Housing (ii) Debt

	County Court possession summonses for rent	County Court possession summonses for mortgage
Apr-03	70	44
May-03	57	29
Jun-03	64	40
Jul-03	73	29
Aug-03	75	35
Sep-03	58	30
Oct-03	72	65
Nov-03	74	31
Dec-03	57	27
Jan-04	62	33
Feb-04	66	42
Mar-04	41	30
Apr-04	57	26
May-04	44	22
Jun-04	89	42
Jul-04	62	31
Aug-04	23	34
Sep-04	80	38
Oct-04	14	33
Nov-04	69	40
Dec-04	62	33
Jan-05	77	42
Feb-05	80	43
Mar-05	77	52
Apr-05	72	50
May-05	63	49
Jun-05	71	56
Jul-05	59	58
Aug-05	65	47
Sep-05	105	47
Oct-05	63	51
Nov-05	99	58
Dec-05	46	63
Jan-06	119	71
Feb-06	96	59
Mar-06	50	68
Apr-06	55	50
May-06	89	56
Jun-06	115	78
Jul-06	79	77
Aug-06	56	74
Sep-06	55	60
Oct-06	74	76
Nov-06	69	71
Dec-06	67	45
Jan-07	52	73
Feb-07	80	59
Mar-07	70	78
Apr-07	53	56
May-07	86	105
Jun-07	63	70
Jul-07	75	98
Aug-07	83	97
Sep-07	74	65
Oct-07	73	68
Nov-07	58	89
Dec-07	54	67
Jan-08	77	93
Feb-08	70	94
Mar-08	75	77
Apr-08	45	110
May-08	51	77
Jun-08	65	75
Jul-08	70	92
Aug-08	87	77

2003/04 averages are	64 (rent)	36 (mortgage)
2004/05 averages are	61 (rent)	36 (mortgage)
2005/06 averages are	76 (rent)	56 (mortgage)
2006/07 averages are	72 (rent)	66 (mortgage)
2007/08 averages are	70 (rent)	82 (mortgage)

## Tameside County Court Possession Summonses



**Tameside Council Tax  
Debt Recovery**

	No. of CTAX liability orders issued	Annual Totals
Apr-03	470	
May-03	1238	
Jun-03	2378	
Jul-03	1154	
Aug-03	669	
Sep-03	975	
Oct-03	846	
Nov-03	790	
Dec-03	571	
Jan-04	712	
Feb-04	0	
Mar-04	989	10792
Apr-04	537	
May-04	619	
Jun-04	2700	
Jul-04	705	
Aug-04	736	
Sep-04	714	
Oct-04	784	
Nov-04	384	
Dec-04	247	
Jan-05	636	
Feb-05	174	
Mar-05	557	8793
Apr-05	443	
May-05	125	
Jun-05	2678	
Jul-05	761	
Aug-05	975	
Sep-05	526	
Oct-05	908	
Nov-05	553	
Dec-05	673	
Jan-06	1010	
Feb-06	495	
Mar-06	541	9688
Apr-06	461	
May-06	447	
Jun-06	2974	
Jul-06	714	
Aug-06	943	
Sep-06	1035	
Oct-06	806	
Nov-06	0	
Dec-06	0	
Jan-07	513	
Feb-07	0	
Mar-07	60	7953
Apr-07	155	
May-07	1408	
Jun-07	0	
Jul-07	0	
Aug-07	3035	
Sep-07	1641	
Oct-07	1105	
Nov-07	880	
Dec-07	531	
Jan-08	814	
Feb-08	890	
Mar-08	179	10638
Apr-08	79	
May-08	836	
Jun-08	2486	
Jul-08	1900	
Aug-08	1388	

### Tameside Council Tax Debt Recovery

