

# Community Legal Service Partnership

## Minutes of the Steering Group

26th April 2005

Calderdale Women's Centre, Silver Street, Halifax

### Present:

Della Byrom (DB), Legal Services Commission  
Cath Miller (CM), Calderdale MBC  
Christine Taylor (CT), Ovenden Initiative  
Jayne Carruthers (JC), Sure Start North Halifax  
Neil Dyson Queens (ND), Road Advice Centre  
Clare Hyde (CH), Calderdale Women's Centre  
Sarah Manfredi (SM), Calderdale MBC  
Heidi Wilson (HW), Calderdale MBC

### Apologies:

Brent Patterson (BP), Pattersons Solicitors  
Sajid Hashmi (SH), Voluntary Action Calderdale  
Pat Akerman (PA), Age Concern Calderdale  
Ian Christie (IC), Calderdale CAB

Katherine Blaker (Refugees Council) had recently left her post, and the Refugee Council had decided that they would not send a representative in future, although they did give a contact that would continue to receive the papers and would feed into any specific issues that affected refugees and asylum seekers.

#### 1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

1.2 **Benefit Take Up Meeting** (item 1.2 in the minutes of the last meeting): This is scheduled for 27th April; the outcome of this meeting will be fed back to the next Steering Group meeting.

1.3 **Local Directory** (item 1.3 in the minutes of the last meeting): This is at the printers and will be scheduled for printing asap.

#### 2. Quality Mark Support

2.1 Unfortunately, SH was not at this meeting and had not responded to DB's earlier requests for information and input into the draft contract.

2.2 Voluntary Action Calderdale (VAC)'s failure to respond on this issue is becoming a concern. The money has been paid to them, but no action is being taken by them to agree the contract or targets. Whilst it was acknowledged that SH had a valid reason for not attending this particular meeting, DB and SM expressed concern about his lack of input prior to the meeting which means that once again no progress can be made.

2.3 At the last meeting, Steering Group members were asked to identify any groups that they wanted to see given priority for support in achieving the Quality Mark. It was agreed that the contract for the project would include a target of 10 groups receiving intensive support, including the following specific groups (subject to their agreement):

- Calderdale Mind

- Stonham Housing, particularly for their refuges
- Foundation Housing
- Anchor Trust Staying Put Project
- Smartmove.

2.4 As part of the discussion of the Quality Mark, CH criticised the lack of reference to protection issues within the Quality Mark requirements. Organisations are not required to have child protection policies or to have considered protection issues. It was agreed that the CLSP would write to the Legal Services Commission (LSC) asking them to consider including protection issues in the Quality Mark in future.

**\*Action:**

- DB to write to VAC to request information about the money that has been paid to them to fund the Quality Mark Support project;
- As a key funder of VAC, SM will write to ask SH to treat this as a priority to enable this project to move forward.
- SM to draft a letter with CH asking the LSC to review the Quality Mark's approach to protection issues.

### 3. Working with Funders

3.1 SM talked through the discussion paper on developing a relationship with key funders in Calderdale. A number of other funders were identified but there may still be gaps. 'Key funders' were defined as those funders that regularly fund organisations in Calderdale, including those that may not identify legal advice and information services as a specific priority at the moment.

3.2 As part of the discussion of which funders required the CLS Quality Mark, DB identified potential for seeing if organisations within Supporting People's Quality Assessment Framework could be passported into the CLS scheme.

3.3 It was agreed that the CLSP would send out publicity leaflets to all key funders. Two kinds of publicity leaflets and materials would be needed, since the drivers for statutory funders are very different from those of trust funders. Statutory funders would then receive a copy of the Advice Strategy. All funders would then receive a further letter offering to establish a protocol along the lines of the one in place between the Big Lottery Fund and the LSC.

**\*Action:**

- DB to speak to LSC about passporting Supporting People providers, and HW to speak to the helpline run by the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
- SM to draft publicity materials and letters by the next meeting.
- ALL STEERING GROUP MEMBERS to email SM with details of any key funders not already included on the list.

### 4. Calderdale Forward Monitoring

4.1 A breakdown of the Calderdale Forward monitoring requirements was circulated. ND pointed out that the measure should refer to services funded "by members of the CLSP", not just "by the CLSP".

4.2 DB talked through the output figures currently available from the LSC. We

will overachieve on the number of Quality Marked advice and information points, but are likely to underachieve on the number of individuals helped.

4.3 The LSC paid for enough cases to meet their target for individuals, but these were not delivered. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, some solicitors had left, as they were not making enough money out of their contracts with LSC. Secondly, where contracts remained in place, solicitors were underperforming because they were not getting enough eligible clients.

4.4 This is part of a national trend, but it is very worrying in Calderdale especially, which has such a low level of provision to start with. It was agreed that the review of the Advice Strategy would need to look at the issue of private practice provision as a priority.

4.5 BP had sent comments to the meeting, on the need to further develop relationships with private practice solicitors. It was agreed that a working group, involving BP and any other members of the Steering Group that wanted to talk part, would be held to look at ways of engaging solicitors with the CLS.

- 4.6 Some of the issues to be considered by the Working Group will be:
- what can we offer private practice solicitors / what is the benefit to them of getting involved
  - could we link into the meetings currently being held between the LSC Contract Manager and private practice solicitors?
  - solicitors are not allowed to advertise their LSC-funded services, but CLSPs can advertise on their behalf
  - other areas have discussed vouchers, distributed to high need areas to draw eligible clients in
  - would a legal roadshow work? – giving people the chance to come and meet solicitors, de-mystifying the legal process.

**\*Action:**

- SM to speak to BP and then email all members of the Steering Group about dates for a private practice working group.

## 5. Review of the Advice Strategy

5.1 The last version of the Advice Strategy was published in 2004, so it is time to review and update the strategy. It was agreed that this work would be scheduled for the summer, with the aim of publishing an updated version in late autumn/ winter 2005. The LSC is currently reviewing how they are assessing need, and DB agreed to bring details back to the new meeting.

5.2 The Strategy should also consider the difference between need and demand, and how we can maintain services by increasing demand to match the high levels of need.

5.3 It was agreed that this would be discussed in detail at the next Steering Group meeting.

**\*Action:**

- DB to put together information on needs analysis / general eligibility model.
- SM to ensure that the Advice Strategy is an early item on the next agenda.

## 6. Partnerships Feedback

6.1 **Domestic Violence Forum:** CH reported on the development of new Information Management Systems by the police and Calderdale Women's Centre. These will help improve information sharing and analysis around domestic violence, and can be fed into the review of the Advice Strategy.

## 7. Any Other Business

7.1 SM explained that the reason that she had not brought an item on the Calderdale Compact is because the Compact Steering Group are currently developing a range of practical materials around this issue. It will be more helpful to bring the Compact to a future meeting once these materials are available.

7.2 SM had been offered the chance to advertise the CLSP on the new plasma screen which is to be installed in the Central Library, Halifax. She had signed up for this, in order to promote the CLS Direct phone line and website, as well as the CLSP itself. This will cost £600 pa for one minute's worth of screen time every hour. It is suggested that this time be split into four 15 second segments, with three or four questions that direct people to CLS Direct, eg "Are you in debt? Are you having trouble with your landlord? etc You could get help from CLS Direct. Sponsored by Calderdale CLSP". All Steering Group members are asked to send any suitable background pictures and short questions for inclusion in the advertisement.

### **\*Action:**

- ALL STEERING GROUP MEMBERS to send suggestions for questions and any suitable digital images to SM. SM to follow up with advertisers.

## 8. Date of the Next Two Meetings

8.1 The next meeting will be at 1:30pm, on Tuesday 7th June 2005, at Calderdale Women's Centre.

8.2 The following meeting will be at 1:30pm on Tuesday 26th July. The venue will be confirmed closer to the date.

## 9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

9.1 All papers circulated at the meeting will be available to any partnership member or member of the public on request.