

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY CARE WELFARE RIGHTS GROUP
MEETING HELD IN SALFORD ON 8 OCTOBER 1997.

Present:	Mike Hughes (Chair)	Salford Welfare Rights Service
	Martin Rathfelder	Manchester Advice
	Guy Biddles	MRI (Dept. of Psychiatry)
	Caroline Bennett	Withington CAB
	Simon Welch	Oldham Welfare Rights Service
	Christine Richardson	Wigan Welfare Rights Service

1. **Apologies** - Ann Gaughan (Stockport Welfare Rights Service), Haydn Riley (Bolton Welfare Rights Service), Mike Kirk (Salford Welfare Rights Service).
2. **Minutes Of The Last Meeting** - All matters arising were on the agenda. Mike apologised for the fact that he had not seen the minutes before they had been sent out through GMWRAG in order to proof-read them.
3. **Information Exchange** - A tentative offer to host the next meeting had been forwarded from Bolton (via Stockport). In order to avoid confusion Manchester agreed to host the next meeting with an offer from Wigan to look at hosting after that.

Martin circulated the GM Socialist Health Organisation calendar of public meetings for 1997/8. Further details available from Martin on 286 1926. 'Reshaping Primary and Community Care Under Labour' may be of particular interest to members of this group (10 March 1998 in Manchester).

Caroline outlined the work of the NW Legal Services Committee (recently renamed as the Regional Legal Services Committee). This started as a 'pilot' in 1977 and effectively remains as such as it is the only one in the country. It was intended as a forum to explore what people want from legal services but remains a good network and, since the new Lord Chancellor has now taken an interest in the idea, is likely to finally be extended nationwide.

They are beginning to look at Community Care issues such as access to legal advice and are looking for participation from consumer groups, community user groups, local authorities and so on. One could either become directly involved with the Committee with an expected commitment of two days per month, or, look to get involved via the various working groups/projects which exist. Contact Carolyn Schofield @ ...?

Mike confirmed that, **subject to the approval of the GMWRAG treasurer,** Ashley Wood of the Family Welfare Association would run a one day course at Manchester Carers Centre on 9 December 1997. Course title is "An Overview Of Community Care Legislation And Access To Assessments".

Twenty seven paid places will be available @ £35 each with three free places for voluntary organisations. **The course will be administered by Salford.** It was proposed to purchase refreshments and lunchtime sandwiches from the Carers Centre as the cost would be comfortably met whilst still making a gain for GMWRAG. Full details are available with these minutes and will also be sent out with the next GMWRAG mailing..

4. **Housing Benefit** - Martin drew attention to SI 1997/1974 which came into effect from 18 August 1997 to restore the original policy intention in relation to supported accommodation. Mike drew attention to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Circular HB/CTB A37/97. It was agreed that Mike would ensure a reasonable copy went to Manchester to circulate with the minutes. It was felt that the main two issues would be ensuring that the variety of existing scenarios were protected and then looking carefully at all future arrangements.

A brief discussion took place in relation to backdating of HB which may be discussed further at a later date.

5. **Appointeeships** - Martin raised this in the context of having one client with two appointees for their two living situations throughout a given week. A wide-ranging discussion followed which raised the following broad concerns.
- This is an area about which little is known/publicised outside of community care forums.
 - It is an increasing concern in terms of fraud and overpayments.
 - Nominated representatives of the Secretary of State are not taking seriously their role where fraud is alleged in terms of acting to switch/end appointeeships.
 - The Fraud Act may provide a way in to raise this as an issue for social work staff, finance teams and owners of various accommodation.

It was agreed that this should be on the agenda at the Manchester meeting and that people should bring their own experiences of what good or bad practice there is in their own areas.

6. **Any Other Business** - Caroline publicised the report of Simon Banks (Age Concern Cheshire) in relation to charging policy in that area titled "Rights and Risks".

Simon requested information on Sefton case for training about to be undertaken. Mike agreed to find and pass on. Could anyone with good material on self-funding also contact him a.s.a.p.

7. **Date Of Next Meeting** - 26 November 1997 at 2pm in Manchester Town Hall. (Apologies to those present at the meeting where 10am was agreed