

Greater Manchester
Pay and
Employment Rights
Advice Service

Annual Report
2005/2006

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the period April 2005 to March 2006 and provides an overview of the work of Greater Manchester Pay and Employment Rights Advice Service.

This has been an exciting year for us and one in which we are pleased to be able to report a number of developments that we expect to build upon in 2006 – 2007.

We began the year as Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit based in New Mount St and ended as Greater Manchester Pay and Employment Rights Advice Service, based in Swan Buildings on Swan St. We discussed our name change with many individuals and agencies and although we recognise that its not the shortest name that we could have chosen, it is one that accurately describes who we are and what we do and that was our intention. Thank you to all those who helped us with this.

We have spent considerable time this year in raising our profile across the region – by promoting and continuing to highlight the advice line services including the wide range of up to date factsheets, the development of new and improved referral systems for advice agencies, and securing resources to develop the website to provide advice in a number of languages.

As part of our wider review about the direction and development of the organisation we also registered as a charity and appointed a new co-ordinator to further develop the work already undertaken as part of the strategic review which we began in 2004.

We are particularly pleased this year to have secured funding, through Changeup, to develop the personnel and employment law support we provide to the voluntary and community sector throughout Greater Manchester. Further details of this are reported in more detail later in this report. This has ensured that we are in a unique position to provide essential infrastructure services to support the development and improved quality of employment practices within the voluntary sector in Greater Manchester.

We have continued to research the job market in Greater Manchester and made submissions to the Low Pay Commission and to local and regional development agencies. Workers throughout Greater Manchester continue to face discrimination, poor working conditions and the denial of their basic employment rights. We remain committed to ensuring that every worker has access to employment rights and the support to assert those rights.

I hope you enjoy this report and look forward to your continued support for the work of Greater Manchester Pay and Employment Rights Advice Service

David Neary - Chair

Staff

We continue to rely on the hard work of a dedicated staff team and appreciate their commitment and hard work particularly through a time of change.

Allison Foreman and **Lesley Hunter** have continued in their role as Employment Rights Advice Workers. Both workers have been extremely busy meeting the demand for accessible and accurate information, advice and support service by:

- Undertaking individual advice and casework to Greater Manchester workers;
- Providing a specialist second-tier information, advice and support service to advice agencies across Greater Manchester;
- Maintaining, updating and producing new employment rights factsheets, leaflets and booklets;
- Providing training to generalist advisers across Greater Manchester.

Katie Brotherston is the Research Worker who continues to

- Publish Jobwatch, the annual survey and report of jobs in Greater Manchester,
- Produces the quarterly publication BottomLine,
- And undertakes research into aspects of employment and the labour market in Greater Manchester.

Ruth Seneviratne is the Administration Worker responsible for the smooth day to day running of the office including our IT;

- Distributing a wide range of material including employment rights factsheets, leaflets, booklets and pay factsheets;
- Updating and maintaining databases and backup for IT
- Data inputting for research;
- Maintaining and developing the website.

Denise McDowell was employed as Co-ordinator from May 2005 responsible for the management and strategic development of the organisation.

Funding and Support

We remain reliant on the grant from the **Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA)** to carry out our core activities of information, advice and research. We are grateful to AGMA for their consistent support of our work.

During the course of the year we secured funding through Changeup to run a project to provide personnel and employment law support to voluntary and community organisations throughout Greater Manchester.

We also gained financial support for 2006-7 from Oxfam GB to develop a website to provide translated employment rights advice and information, and from Awards for All to promote employment rights to those workers in areas of Greater Manchester with the highest poverty indices.

We were grateful to the Trustees of West Midlands Low Pay Unit for their donation.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on 24 November 2005. This was the first AGM in our new name and after the changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Association that were agreed at the Extraordinary General Meeting held in September 2005. These were submitted to the Charity Commission when we made our application to become a registered charity.

Management Committee

Over the year we have continued to receive invaluable support from the Management Committee who have demonstrated commitment and energy to the changes that are being made within the organisation. We continue to encourage interest in becoming a member of the committee from those who have an interest and commitment to challenging poverty and low pay. If anyone would like further information contact the Co-ordinator.

Advice, Information and Support

Greater Manchester Pay and Employment Rights Advice Service provides a unique region-wide employment rights advice, information and support service to anyone living in Greater Manchester. The telephone advice line is widely advertised through leaflets and posters in libraries, advice centres, community centres and other venues, and through coverage of our activities in the local press and on local radio.

Analysis of calls to the Advice Line

Between 1st April 2005 and 31st March 2006 the advice line dealt with 2,188 individual callers regarding employment rights queries. This is an increase on the 2,108 callers we dealt with in 2004-05.

Many callers continue to have complex and multiple employment problems that they require information, advice and support with, and which can take a considerable length of time to resolve. The number of new rights introduced means that calls to the advice line have become much more complex. It is very common for workers to be denied more than one employment right, and very

often the advisers find that the original query was just the first of a number of issues.

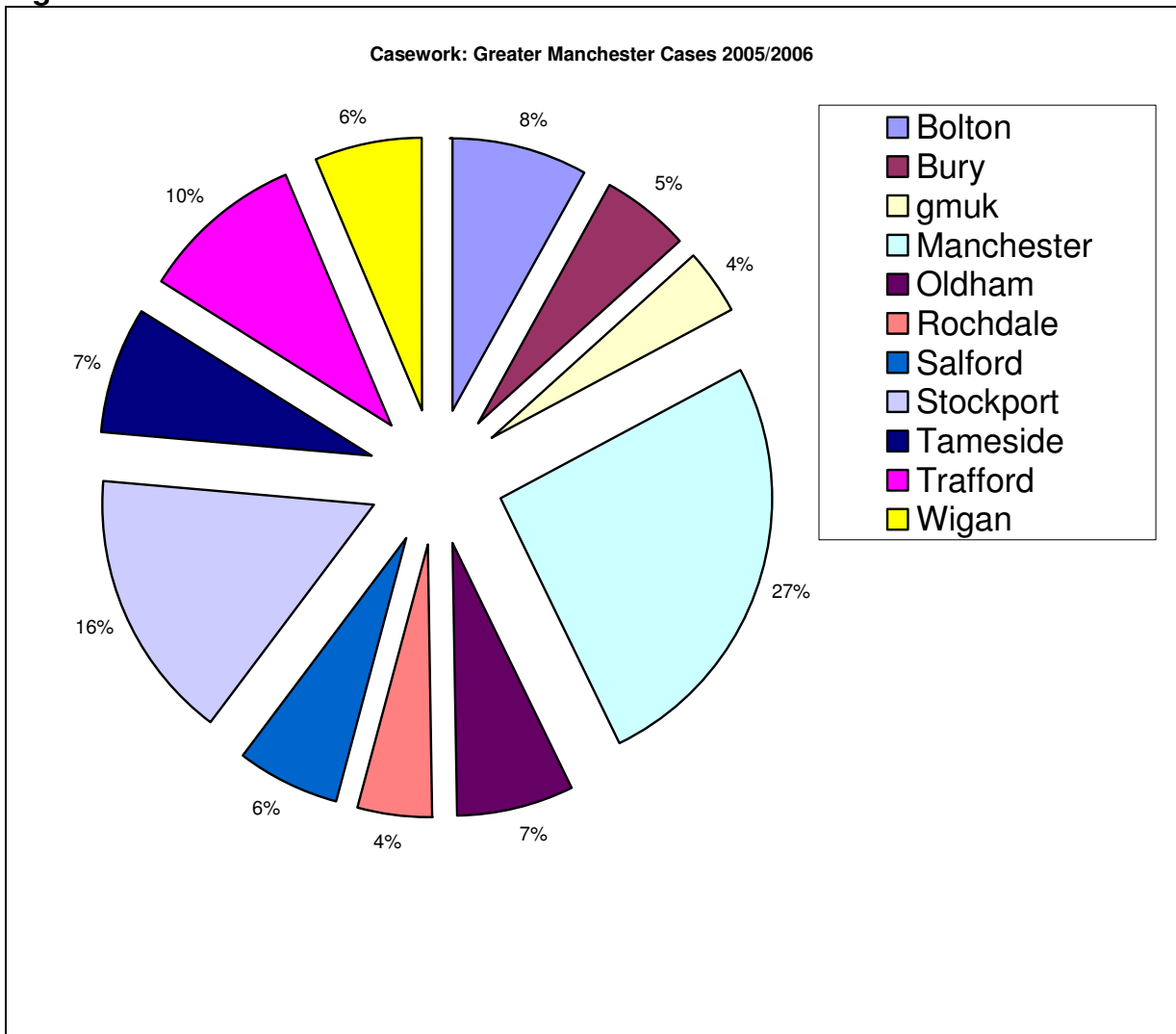
In many cases callers have been referred to us by other agencies which lack the specialist knowledge of our advice workers. It was possible to identify the source of the referral to us in over a quarter of cases and this showed that:

- 44% of callers were referred by an advice agency such as a Citizens Advice Bureau;
- 14% of callers came through advice stalls or our publicity;
- 22% of callers were already aware of our existence;
- 13% of callers found out about the service through word of mouth;

Other sources of referral were through directory enquiries, Jobcentres, libraries, health service professionals and the internet.

95% of cases were known to originate in the ten districts of Greater Manchester. For the remaining 5% of callers the district was unable to be identified due to caller anonymity. Figure 1 shows the spread of calls across the county.

Figure 1



Not all calls originate with workers. In the last year the calls were broken down as follows:

- 74% of calls came from workers;
- 12% of calls came from relatives or friends of workers;
- 9% of calls came directly from advice agencies;
- 3% of calls came from employers;
- 2% of calls came from other sources such as careers advisers, local councillors and so on.

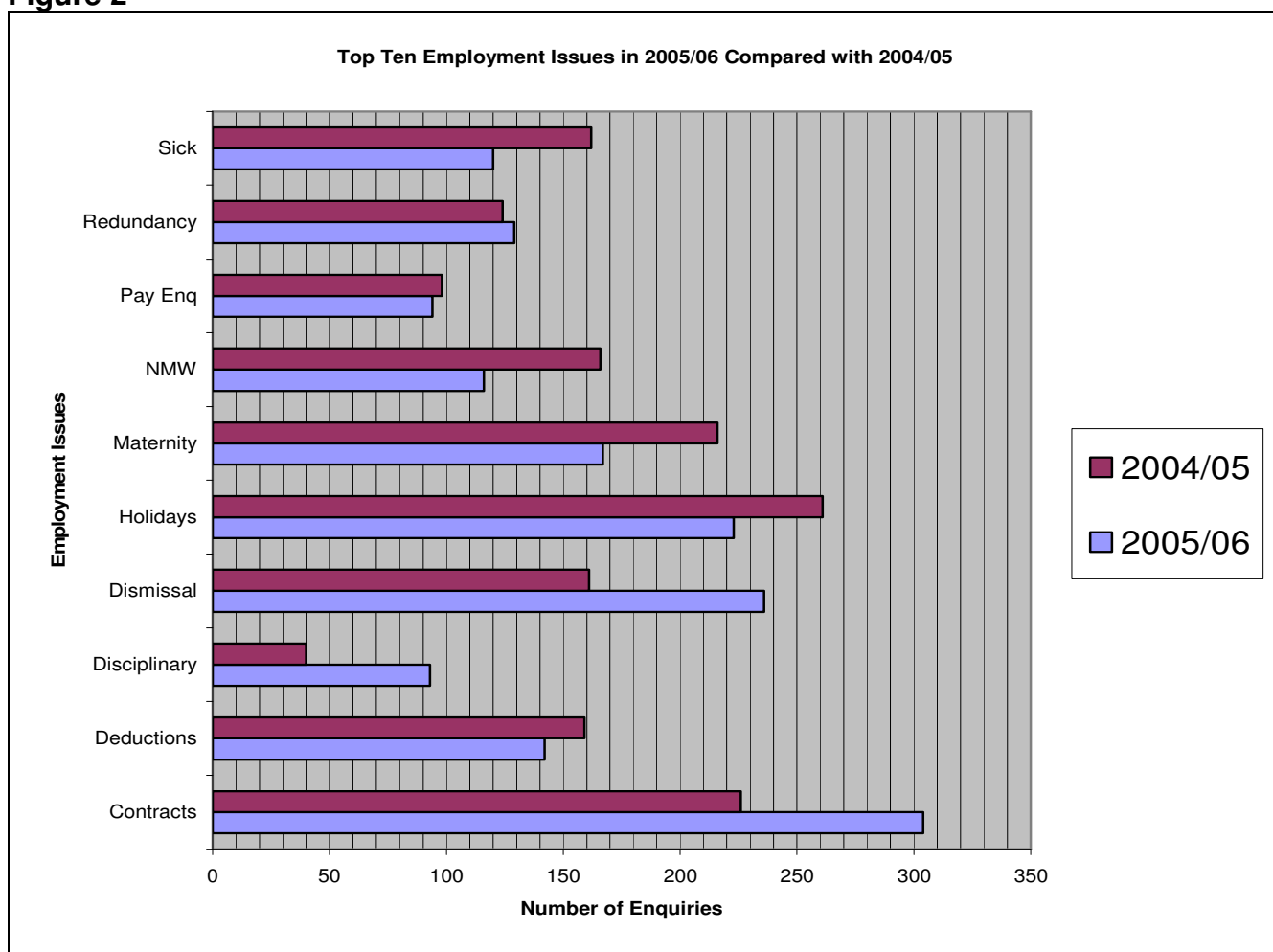
Of the cases identified by gender, 61% were from women and 39% from men, similar proportions to previous years. This reflects the fact that women workers

are more likely to work in the lowest-paid jobs with the poorest terms and conditions in the lowest-paying sectors.

It was possible to identify the employment status of the worker concerned in 68% of cases. Of these, the overwhelming majority (95%), were from employees. 4% were from unemployed people while self-employed people, trainees and other categories made up just 1% of those contacting us.

The 2,188 cases recorded raised 2,429 employment issues. Figure 2 shows the top ten issues that were raised in 2005/2006 and how this compares with the previous year.

Figure 2



There has been an increase in the number of calls about contracts, dismissal, disciplinary and redundancy. The number of holiday and maternity enquiries has decreased although the law is due to change in these areas next year which will generate more enquiries.

Besides the topics listed above, the advice workers give advice on the full range of employment issues, for example disability, other forms of discrimination at work, hours and breaks and flexible working to name just a few.

Quality of the information, advice and support service

The majority of workers who contact the advice line are sent written material such as factsheets, and are also sent a feedback form which they are invited to complete and return.

These forms are monitored at each advice team meeting in order to provide feedback to advice workers, to identify areas of very good performance and to highlight any problems that there might be with the service provided.

In 2005/2006 174 completed forms were returned and analysis of these forms shows that the advice, information and support service is highly valued. In detail, when asked the questions:

- “did you find the person you spoke to was easy to talk to?”
- “did you feel that s/he was able to answer your question?”

173 respondents answered “yes”, and one didn’t answer the questions.

Several chose to add comments to their answers: “brilliant”; “very helpful”; “very approachable”; “most helpful”; “... made me feel a lot more positive about my issue at work”; “very pleasant and helpful”; and “helpful and informative”;

Callers were asked if they knew what action they could take after speaking to the advisor. 167 answered “yes” and 4 answered “no”. The 4 who answered no all made comments.

All callers were asked to rate from “very easy” to “very difficult” if they understood the information that they had been sent. Analysis of the feedback forms shows that:

- 92 (53%) respondents said the information was “very easy” to understand.
- 65 (38%) respondents said the information was “easy” to understand.
- 15 (9%) respondents said the information was “quite easy” to understand.

No respondents said that they rated the information as “difficult” or “very difficult” to understand.

Callers were also asked to rate from “very good” to “very poor” the overall quality of the service. Analysis of the feedback forms shows that:

- 153 (88%) respondents rated the service as “very good”.
- 18 (10%) respondents rated the service as “good”.
- 3 (2%) respondents rated the service as “satisfactory”

No respondents rated the service as “poor” or “very poor”.

These figures indicate that overall there were very high ratings from callers about our information, advice and support services. Many callers chose to add comments to the feedback form and these indicate the high value that is attached to the service, as the following sample of comments show.

“Excellent service. Gave me good service last year for redundancy and my daughter. Very good.”

“Every time I have used your free service I have always been telephoned back if I left a message. The staff have been polite and very helpful and always sent out information relating to my telephone enquiry. Keep up the good work!”

“And I wouldn’t have had a clue what to do if it wasn’t for all your help. I very much appreciate it. Thank you.”

“I have always been impressed by the staff in your organisation as they have always been extremely helpful and well informed and they have always been able to answer my queries and I have highly recommended them to other people in need of advice. Thank you for being such a valuable organisation.”

“Very helpful indeed and feel I can phone again for help anytime.”

“Very approachable. Most helpful. You were most prompt in sending information to me. I thank you most sincerely.”

“The service I received was very good. I was very impressed with the level of support and advice given and patience of the person I spoke to. I didn’t feel I was being fobbed off even when I felt I was being repetitive as was very concerned and worried about my situation. I was impressed by the fact that even though yours is, probably an over subscribed service, that after I left a message I was phoned back.”

“As always, excellent advice given. Explained in terms everyone could understand”

“... It was very reassuring to speak to someone whom is honestly there to help you. Thank you.”

“Would have no hesitation in calling again. Great service!”

“I have told every organisation I have been in touch with how useful and friendly your service was.”

“An absolutely fantastic service. A real credit. Lesley put my mind at rest and made me feel 100 times better.”

“Allison was very helpful. After having spoken to many people, Allison was the first person to actually listen to me. That meant a lot.”

“Excellent and very helpful”

“Because of the information you gave me, the management didn’t push their luck. Thank you very much”

We are very encouraged that these comments indicate that there is a high level of satisfaction and appreciation of our information, advice and support service.

Advice stalls

We held advice stalls in eight districts of Greater Manchester during the year. This year stalls were held at:

- **Bolton**
- **Bury**
- **Manchester**
- **Oldham**
- **Rochdale**
- **Salford**
- **Trafford**
- **Wigan**

We were unable to arrange a stall in Tameside due to a change in shopping centre management, but we have arranged one already for 06/07. We also had difficulty arranging a stall in Stockport but figures were already quite high.

We also held stalls at the following events to promote the work of the organisation; Voluntary Action Oldham AGM, CVS conference in Tameside, the launch of Manchester Community Strategy, and Oldham Women's Day.

The stalls carry all of our leaflets and factsheets, and advice workers are on hand to answer specific employment rights queries on the spot.

A significant number of people take away information for themselves and others. Many others however have seen the stall advertised in the local press and specifically visit the stall with an employment rights problem.

Factsheets, Leaflets and Booklets

We widely distribute up to date employment rights factsheets, leaflets and booklets to individual callers and a wide range of agencies across Greater Manchester. Many agencies throughout Greater Manchester rely on our factsheets to support the advice work that they undertake within their own services.

We also produce pay factsheets which are used by individual workers to negotiate for better rates of pay, and are helpful to employers and agencies looking for 'going rates of pay' for particular occupations.

Other information requests

As well as the employment rights information, advice and support given to workers, employers and other agencies, we provide information and advice to a variety of individuals and organisations including local councils, academics, trade unions, journalists, MPs, students and community groups.

These requests vary, from relatively minor requests for statistics to much larger requests for information on local labour markets and employment issues.

Research and Publications

We continue to undertake research and to use the findings to produce reports, summaries and briefings to contribute to policy debates and to influence national and local decision-making on a range of labour market issues.

Jobwatch 2005

This annual survey continues to provide invaluable information on the local labour market which is unavailable elsewhere. The report for 2005 was based on 11,922 jobs advertised in Job centres throughout Greater Manchester. As a result of the findings of the survey we have made a number of recommendations to the government including:

- Prioritise the creation of quality sustainable jobs in employment programmes.
- Examine the operation of the Lower Earnings Limit in relation to benefit entitlements.
- Raise the national minimum wage to a 'living' wage ensuring that dependence on state benefits and tax credits is reduced and that real inroads are made into the gender pay gap.
- Strengthen the existing law giving rights to part-time workers so that it provides effective protection against pay discrimination.
- Pursue policy issues on low pay and employment with local MPs and the government.
- Encourage good employment practice within key sectors.
- Continue to monitor the local labour market and the impact of the minimum wage.

Bottomline

Bottomline, our quarterly publication, was reviewed in 2005 and was launched in Spring 2006 to give it a new focus. Contents have included articles on;

Challenge to eradicate Child Poverty by 2010.

Migrant Workers – Employment Rights for all

The Gender Pay Gap

Security in Retirement

Apprenticeships and the National Minimum Wage

Other commissioned research –

We were again invited to submit evidence to the Low Pay Commission. The report, 'The National Minimum Wage; evidence to the Low Pay Commission', was published in September 2005

Website

Our website contains a vast amount of information on all of our services including employment rights factsheets, pay factsheets and research reports.

The website is very accessible and is a valuable source of information for workers, employers and other advice and support organisations. In the year 2005/2006 the website received more than 200,000 hits.

Towards the end of the year we received agreement from Oxfam GB to fund a new website from which anyone will be able to download employment rights information in a number of languages other than English. This will help to support other work which is taking place to promote the rights of migrant workers and those who are the most vulnerable within the workforce.

Training and Talks

In the last year we ran a number of training courses and made presentations to a variety of groups.

We again provided employment rights training for advice agencies in Greater Manchester through Manchester Advice and Information Network. The session is part of a longer Generalist Advice Skills course which is accredited by Manchester Open College Network.

We also set up and ran a number of courses around common employment issues. These included Dispute Resolution, Taking on staff for the first time (for voluntary and community organisations), and Managing Absence.

We made presentations to the Community Legal Service Partnership groups and to volunteers and advisers in local advice agencies as well as to a number of voluntary sector conferences and network meetings.

ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR TO 27th MARCH 2006 (draft)

*Income and Expenditure Account
(For a copy of the full accounts please contact us)*

	Total (£)
	2006
<u>Income</u>	
<i>Greater Manchester S.48 Grant Scheme</i>	138,100
<i>Other Grants</i>	23,180.41
<i>Affiliations</i>	717.00
<i>Donation</i>	1,069.05
<i>Bank Interest</i>	1,960.62
<i>Miscellaneous Income</i>	3,911.60
Total	168,938.68
<u>Expenditure</u>	
<i>Salaries and Recruitment</i>	109,217.54
<i>Telephone, postage, stationery and publicity</i>	12,046.37
<i>Rent, Rates, Heat and Light</i>	15,710.68
<i>Literature and Subscriptions</i>	1,422.50
<i>Travel and Subsistence</i>	896.11
<i>Equipment</i>	5,706.38
<i>Depreciation</i>	3,108.98
<i>Training</i>	1,665.07
<i>Audit and Accountancy</i>	3,049.46
<i>Insurance</i>	1,108.31
<i>Office Administration</i>	791.40
<i>Bank Charges</i>	38.02
<i>AGM and Management Committee Expenses</i>	229.02
<i>ChangeUp Project Costs not included above</i>	4,979.76
<i>Miscellaneous Expenditure</i>	51.75
Total	160,021.35
<u>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR (LOSS)</u>	8,917.33

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

We are grateful to members of the Management Committee who have generously supported the organisation with their time and expertise during the year.

Amanda Challis (Vice Chair)
Jane Fitzsimons (resigned)
Alan Manning
Sue Kelly
Paul Mittler
Dr David Neary (Chair)
Gerry White
Kevin Morley

Greater Manchester Pay and Employment Rights Advice Service

4th Floor, Swan Buildings

20 Swan Street

Manchester M4 5JW

General Office: 0161 839 3882

Advice Line: 0161 839 3888

e-mail: info@gmemploymentrights.org.uk

website: www.gmemploymentrights.org.uk