

# CHOICE

## London Support Group

The twice-yearly newsletter from the LSG

March 2004

### Welcome to our first newsletter!

The London Support Group will be publishing CHOICE twice a year and look forward to bringing you all our news, including more of our members success stories!

So, why call it CHOICE? LSG membership is based on each member making a positive choice to participate and belong to the group. Realistic and acceptable options of choice are usually missing when we experience bullying, the group hopes to replace this negative experience by offering members a choice with a positive outcome - the support and help they need. Our newsletter will be bringing you news of the choices we have made individually and collectively, so CHOICE is very appropriate.

### Campaigning

The LSG signed up to become a member of the **Support Group Network** ([www.jfo.org.uk](http://www.jfo.org.uk)), which links workplace bullying support groups around the world.

Through this, we signed up to **CORE, the Corporate Responsibility Coalition** ([www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates/core/index.htm](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/corporates/core/index.htm)), which seeks legislation to ensure that corporations meet their social and environmental obligations. Many companies do not take bullying seriously and even if anti-bullying policies exist, they are rarely used effectively. The LSG look forward to getting involved in more Network-led campaigns.

### Message from the organiser

Since the group started with 6 members back in May 2002, we grew to almost **50 members** in late March 2004. Running the group single-handed during that time has been hard work but immensely rewarding and enjoyable. Whilst I will remain involved, the growing numbers, my prolonged ill-health and recognising that not all members were supported meant that some major changes must be made for the group to be viable and for me to be able to continue.

The first of those changes were put in place late March, starting on the road to providing a **more effective, focused and sustainable support group**. I am also pleased to announce the **introduction of our website**, hosted on [www.jfo.org.uk](http://www.jfo.org.uk), with other groups and the Network.

Future changes will include the introduction of a **buddy system** that has been trialled very successfully; **volunteers** to help with the running of the group; expansion of the website and we are currently in the process of agreeing a **new home for our meetings** that will be more suited to our needs and planned **workshop-style meetings**. More details in the next edition!

I hope you have enjoyed CHOICE - I look forward to bringing you more news later in the year. Jo

### Members Successes

Our members have had some very good successes in the last 6 months. This is brought to you with the inevitable sad news that there were also some losses but it is clear that our members tend to have a higher rate of success compared to targets who do not the benefit of belonging to a support group. This may be due to sharing advice and knowledge, as well as sharing the best - and proven - legal contacts where possible.

### LSG Scorecard 6 months to Mar 2004

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Our member K won her **Employment Tribunal for unfair dismissal** and was able to quickly move to another job.

Our member A won his **Employment Appeal Tribunal on a Disability Discrimination** issue and is now in settlement negotiations.

Our member J took an **Employment Tribunal for Equal Pay** but the employer settled in full prior to the case going to a full hearing.

Our member J was accepted by the Department of Work & Pensions to have suffered two **Industrial Injuries** caused by workplace bullying. This is difficult to prove but more so to then go through the medical and be awarded a disability for that injury: the member was indeed awarded a **disability for psychological trauma for workplace bullying**, which constitutes a major success in a difficult area of government benefits.

Our member L arranged an exit from her company with a **compromise agreement** rather than choose to go through a prolonged grievance and employment tribunal.

Two members were successful in being accepted for **early retirement on the grounds of ill health**. Whilst this is not a success in terms of damaged health, it does at least represent some financial stability for our members in the face of continuing ill health. Ill Health Retirement is difficult to be accepted for, the cost implications for the employer are substantial - the alternative is termination under what is known as frustration of contract, effectively getting nothing.

### Coming up....

One member is awaiting the outcome of an **Employment Tribunal**

One member is awaiting the outcome of an **Industrial Injury appeal**

Three members have **Employment Tribunal** cases

Two members have **High Court** cases

One member has a **Court of Appeal** case

If you would like to join the LSG or find out more, please visit our website at [www.jfo.org.uk](http://www.jfo.org.uk) or email [lsg@jfo.org.uk](mailto:lsg@jfo.org.uk). Our members have participated in media stories and research and welcome further enquiries.