



2008-2009 Annual Report

Registered Charity No. 1114607

Company No. 05617439

Member of Advice UK

Exempted by the OISC Ref No: N200100441

Certified by the Community Legal Services

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Foreword

I have been involved with the East European Advice Centre for 23 years, first as an adviser and now to my current role as a Chair. Each year has seen new achievements and fresh challenges. Each year has seen some traditional themes that would have been familiar since EEAC was established in 1984, but also some changes that could not have been predicted even a decade ago. This year has been no exception.

The 2008/09 has been particularly challenging due to the economic downturn, the impact of which was acutely felt by many of our clients, if not the whole community. The EEAC, like many third sector organizations, strived to maintain the level and quality of service in the context of increasing demand with downward pressure on expenditure.

In this challenging climate, we continued to provide a holistic service, offering advice on complex issues. A large number of our clients needed information and advice in areas such as immigration, housing, health and education. But we have seen a growing increase in the numbers of clients needing advice and practical help with their benefits and employment issues. We attribute this increase to the impact of the economic downturn.

The other significant shift in demand related to advice on budgeting and general financial advice, both related to job losses as a consequence of the economic downturn. We have responded to this challenge by increasing our preventative work with our clients. We have developed the financial capability programme, which we deliver in partnership with Fulham Citizens' Advice Bureau. The programme provides training and practical help with budgeting and saving money on electricity and gas.

We have also continued to develop our systems to ensure the resources capability matches the increasing demand. This has been particularly noticeable in the introduction of a new, online case management system, Advice Pro. The system allows us to streamline client records, ensuring that these are accessible at any site, thus reducing paperwork, saving time and increasing the accuracy of information held. Most significantly, the detailed data we now hold on our clients greatly enhances the evidence base which informs and underpins our business planning and fundraising activities.

Furthermore, our technological progress will allow us to work more effectively at every level – from advice provision, to the way we collect and analyse data about our clients' problems.

Our greatest challenge over the last year has undoubtedly been the shrinking of the grant pool nationally and across a wide spectrum of donors. This has had an inevitable impact on the viability of the third sector organizations, which depend on grants and donations. The EEAC has been no exception. Despite our great fundraising efforts we were unable to secure additional funding to realise the organisational development plans set out in our current Business Plan to extend our advice services and venture into new areas of work.

This will inevitably have an impact on the levels of service we can provide over the coming year. But we are, as always, committed and determined to make every effort to drive the organization forward and provide the services to those in need. We have a strong base to work from: our management lead is very strong, our staff are skilled, experienced and dedicated, we have a clear vision set out in our Business Plan, and we have a strong oversight of direction from the Management Committee. This gives me reason to remain optimistic for the future of our organisation. It is a vital part of our community and will, I believe, remain so for many years to come.

Gera Drymer

Chair

Our principles

The East European Advice Centre (EEAC) aims to help socially and economically disadvantaged refugees and migrants of East European origin in their efforts to settle in Greater London.

We believe that East Europeans are disadvantaged if they face economic, linguistic or cultural barriers which prevent them from properly accessing mainstream UK services, integrating into the wider UK society and living independent lives.

Our values

The EEAC values underpin the quality and equity of our services and include:

- 1 focus on beneficiaries
- 2 achieving results
- 3 continuous improvement
- 4 working in partnership
- 5 valuing contributions
- 6 promoting equality and fairness

Our vision

To enable people to realise their full potential through accessible, responsive quality advice and to make tangible contributions to developing community self-reliance, improvement and meaningful integration.

Short history of EEAC

The EEAC developed from the Polish Refugee Rights Group, set up in 1981 in response to the plight of Poles stranded in Britain during the time of Martial Law in Poland. Since then, it has developed into a service for people from all East European countries including: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia & Montenegro, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.

Our key achievements

We are extremely fortunate here in EEAC to have such a dedicated, highly professional team. A team comprising of both voluntary and paid advisors, providing a service that is free, independent, nonpartisan, and accessible. Their hard work, commitment and motivation have contributed so successfully in evolving the business of our organisation to its acknowledged position of offering a high quality advice service. They are the greatest strength of our organisation and contribute directly to the organisation's successes.

Business Plan 2008- 2010

Management Committee and staff went through an extensive process of reviewing internal processes and assessing the needs of our beneficiaries and developed a revised 3 year Business Plan.

Securing 4 year funding from London Councils

In partnership with 18 other organizations and Advice UK as a lead partner, we have been successful in a bid to London Councils, securing 4 year funding to provide our clients with access to integrated, culturally and linguistically appropriate advice services across London.

Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) professional development scheme

In April 2008 OISC introduced a professional development scheme to all immigration advisers. To uphold a valid certificate of exemption to give level 1 Immigration advice, both of our advisers, Dana Jozefkowicz and Elizabeth El Ansari attended Level 1 immigration advice refresher courses, completed NVQ level 2 in Customer Services and passed exams in the area of EU law and Nationality and British Citizenship courses therefore achieving the required standard of competence set by new OISC regulations.

Volunteer programme

Volunteers are an integral part of the service delivery by the charity. At the end of the financial year our organisation engaged 25 volunteers (including trustees attending Management Committee meetings) both in terms of support roles (e.g. receptionists, ICT roles, administration, PR, specialist projects) and in the provision of its services. The volunteers, excluding the trustees, are equivalent to 2 full time staff and the estimated value of volunteer inputs is assessed at £53,000.

Energy Best Deal workshops

We have actively taken part in a national campaign together with Fulham Citizens' Advice Bureau and organised practical workshops for our beneficiaries on how to save money on gas and electricity. The workshops were presented in the Polish language and were followed by one to one practical help sessions

helping clients to change to the cheapest gas and electricity supplier and therefore save up to £300.00 per year. The workshops were very popular especially amongst our elderly clients.

Internal and external factors

Fundraising

Our organisation has entered a new funding environment. The challenges we faced were the high levels of competition, cuts in local authority funding, a lack of time and money to invest in developing new fundraising activities.

The fundraising became more complex and time consuming. The new environment required strategic planning for the sustainable long-term future of the organisation and delivering effective fundraising through broadening further our funding sources.

Our unrestricted funding (grant funding) from London Council came to an end in 2008 and in the large partnership bid we secured 4-year commissioning contract with London Council to cover the costs of our core services.

Developing our people

EEAC provides training and skills development to all staff and volunteers.

To enable a flexible training programme, EEAC has developed a range of in – house training sessions, external courses, introduction of allocated reading time to support advisers on on-going issues and e-learning opportunities.

Plans for the future

1. Continue fund-raising activities in accordance with our Business Plan.
2. Find funding to support and improve our health advice.
3. Continue to improve access to advice through volunteer recruitment and training programme.
4. Explore opportunities to provide advice in other areas of expertise in addition to welfare benefits, housing, employment, debt, immigration, health and education.
5. Investigate and develop support possibilities for self-help initiatives among individual clients and client groups as resources allow.
6. Explore new partnership opportunities in the region to develop and extend our service to the maximum number of people.

Statement of financial activities

The full financial statements were approved by the trustees on the 15 of December 2009. They have been sent to the Charity Commission and Registrar of Companies.

The financial statements have been audited by Judith Brookfield, Chartered Accountant & Registered Auditor and received an unqualified opinion.

The following summary may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the organisation. Full annual financial statements including the auditor's report and the trustees' annual report are available from the Treasurer.

In the financial year April 2008/March 2009 the principal funding sources for the charity were statutory grants and grants from trusts and foundations.

To continue the organisation's main activities we received support from London Councils (£62667), LB Hammersmith & Fulham (£18700), City Parochial Foundation (£18000), the City Bridge Trust (£7250) and Citizens Advice (£500). Small sources of unrestricted funding came from donations (£320) and our social enterprise activities including advice consultancy and membership fees (£607).

Grants and donations carried forward from previous year (£9258).

Total income for the financial year was £117302 .

Total expenditure for the year April 2008/March 2009 amounted to £109436 and was allocated to charitable activities (£107603) and governance costs (£1833).

Statistics

With the resources available at present, our Centre is working to its full capacity. Over the past 6 years we have seen a significant increase in the number, nature and complexity of enquiries especially in the areas of welfare benefits, and employment. That shift had a direct link with the accession of East European countries in May 2004.

Number of cases 2003 - 2009

YEAR	NO OF CASES
April 2003/March 2004	2146
April 2004/ March2005	3034
April 2005/ March 2006	3373
April 2006/March 2007	3454
April 2007/March 2008	3393
Aril 2008/March 2009	3423

Number of beneficiaries by geographical location 2008/2009

Borough	%	Borough	%
Hammersmith & Fulham	30.9	Hackney	2.7
Ealing	19.6	Wandsworth	2.6
Outside Greater London	8.0	Barnet	2.6
Brent	6.4	Haringey	2.1
Camden	3.5	Waltham Forest	1.6
Lambeth	3.1	Enfield	1.6
Westminster	3.1	Richmond	1.3
Kensington & Chelsea	3.0	Bromley	0.9
Hanslow	2.8	Tower Hamlets	0.9
Islington	2.8	Bexley	0.5

Nationality of beneficiaries 2008/2009

Nationality	%
Polish	81.3
Roma/Polish	7.5
Lithuanian	2.6
Slovak	2.2
Rumanian	2.1
Ukrainian	1.9
Bulgarian	0.5
Latvian	0.5
Hungarian	0.5
Russian	0.4
Czech	0.3
Estonian	0.2

The things clients say

...my heartfelt gratitude is for the way I was received as a 84 year old 'youngster' with kindness and understanding and it will remain a happy memory... (Housing Benefit and pension credit advice)

...many thanks Mrs El Ansari for your assistance with all this, I would have jumped in the river months ago if I hadn't had this help from you... (Disability Living Allowance Appeal for sick client).

...Mrs Jozefkowicz please retain your happy attitude it can be very uplifting when one is down but you gave me hope and above all kindness and you are a caring and thoughtful lady... (Pension Credit advice for a housebound 67-year-old client)

...the quality and the speed of delivery of services was excellent. I found staff knowledgeable and volunteers friendly and helpful. The result of the help I received was improved income....(Welfare Benefit advice for a lone parent)

Acknowledgements

The East European Advice Centre would like to thank our main funders for their ongoing support:

London Councils

Hammersmith & Fulham Council

City Parochial Foundation

The City Bridge Trust

Citizens Advice Bureau

We would also like to express our gratitude to our partners:

Advice UK

Iranian Association

ACAS

Pearce & Glynn Solicitors

Powell, Spencer & Partners Solicitors

Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in London

Hammersmith & Fulham Community Law Centre

Fulham Citizens Advice Bureau

BPP Pro Bono Centre
LASA
Hammersmith & Fulham Refugee Forum
Advice Now
Hammersmith & Fulham – Housing Services and Homeless Person Unit
Job Centre Plus
Department of Work and Pensions
CITAS
Shepherds Bush Advice Centre
Federation of Poles in Great Britain
Office of the Immigration Services Commissioners
Community Legal Services
CASH

Useful contacts

Management committee members

Gera Drymer (Chair)
Donald Kendrick (Vice- Chair)
Elizabeth Vadillo (Treasurer)
Brian Reed (Secretary)
Marek Jakubowski
Liliana Kowalewska
Krystyna Olliffe
Wiesław Pawluczyk
Krystyna Bell

Manager

Magdalena Dykier

Staff

Dana Jozefkowicz
Elizabeth El Ansari

Volunteers

Katarzyna Adamkiewicz
Malgorzata Pakulska
Monika Suchora
Ewelina Korecko
Marzena Prysok
Airis Palk
Justyna Sotnik
Alicja Mackowiak
Agnieszka Staszczak
Paulina Siuda
Daniel Tiles

Anna Hamre
Wanda Gerzon
Malgorzata Orska
Katarzyna Dziadel
Lily Mirzoian

Accountants

Brookfield & Co
18 Concanon Road
London SW2 5TA
Tel: 02087618400

Contact us

East European Advice Centre
Room 209-210
Palingswick House
241 King Street
W6 9LP London
Tel 0208 741 1288
Fax 0208 741 8388
E-mail info@eeac.org.uk
Web site www.eeac.org.uk