



2006-2007 Annual Report

Registered Charity No. 295854

Member of Advice UK

Exempted by the OISC Ref No: N200100441

Certified by the Community Legal Services

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Chair's report

Over the past year, the East European Advice Centre has continued to work to meet the needs of our clients, provide outreach support to our stakeholders and liaise closely with our funders. The year saw us going through a challenging time following the significant growth in numbers of clients from A8 countries. The impact of the enlargement of the European Union has continued to make a very significant impact on the scale and scope of the need for our services. Whilst a large number of clients continue to need advice and support in areas such as health, housing, education and welfare rights, we have seen a steady increase in the numbers of clients requiring assistance with advice on employment, translation and interpreting. Many of the new arrivals were able to secure jobs and accommodation, but there have been increasing numbers of those who fell on hard times, often through no fault of their own. We have endeavoured to offer positive intervention, enabling clients to find their way back into employment and secure accommodation. But that takes time and resources. Over the last year we have continued to rely on our pool of volunteers to add to the work provided by the EEAC staff. We are very aware that if we are to meet the needs of all those who approach us, we need to seek additional resources and funding. We have started doing so over the last year through establishing partnerships with other organisations, embracing new fundraising approaches and carrying out in-depth analysis of the statistical information on our services. We hope this will put us in a good position to take the organisation forward, secure new funding and branch out into new areas of work.

We look forward to the years ahead. We are keen to continue to work with ever increasing numbers of clients and stakeholders. We are very aware of the difference our work makes to the lives of our clients and we are determined to reach as many as we can. We will also keep abreast of any developments, legislative or good practice guidance, which may impact on our clients and scope of the services we provide. We will do so in order to be able to adapt to what is a rapidly and continuously changing context. We intend to do so in partnership with other organisations committed to helping those in need of support. We believe that such a partnership approach is the way forward for the EEAC and our clients.

Gera Drymer

Chair

Foreword

2006/07 has not been the easiest year for the East European Advice Centre (EEAC). With limited resources we have had to wrestle with the challenges of expanding our funding sources but not reducing the quality or level of service we provide.

For a number of years now we have had to cope with the large number of new and existing clients following the accession of eight East European countries to the European Union in 2004 and an additional two, Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007. We know that many more people would like to use our service that cannot access it at present.

During the year we have undertaken a number of positive developments bringing direct benefits to our clients.

Our information and advice services were delivered in a number of innovative ways: face-to-face, telephone and outreach services, and online via e-mail and our information website accessible to users in their mother tongue.

Against the financial pressures experienced by being unable to secure a development and expansion grant from Big Lottery our main objectives for the year remained unchanged: to extend and enhance the services we provide especially for new arrivals and older people within our community.

Our key achievements

Increasing the number of clients helped

With the dedication, commitment and hard work of staff and volunteers, last year we helped 1359 individual beneficiaries with 3373 enquiries. We recorded an increase in the number of enquiries made in the areas of Welfare Benefits, Housing, Employment and Interpretation/Translation. To improve the quality of the advice given and reduce the time spent on unnecessary form filling we offered all our new clients welfare benefit assessments.

In partnership with HM Revenue & Customs - National Minimum Wage Compliance Office and Hammersmith & Fulham Community Law Centre – Employment Solicitors we have together represented and won employment disputes for a number of our clients in areas of National Minimum Wage, unpaid holidays, notice pay or unpaid wages to a sum totalling over £15,000.

Volunteer programme

EEAC makes a significant use of volunteers both in terms of support roles (e.g. receptionists, Information Communication Technology, administration, Public Relations, specialist projects) and in the provision of its advice services. At the end of the financial year the organisation had 21 volunteers (including trustees). The volunteers, excluding the trustees, are equivalent to 2 full time staff and the estimated value of that input is assessed at £53,000. Volunteers are an integral part of the service delivery by the charity.

Outreach services

Our volunteers and staff visited the 280 most isolated older people during the year. This is a nearly 75% increase in the delivery of this service in comparison to last year. This project led to increased self-esteem and self-confidence and provided older people with:

- advice and information; particularly through benefit check and housing advice
- information on social and leisure activities

This was only possible thanks to new grants received from the City Bridge Trust and Comic Relief.

Extension of services

Last year we extended our telephone enquiry line to cover the needs of difficult to reach older people. The telephone enquiry service has been very popular and comprised:

- Generalist information and advice
- Call back service within 2 working days for clients in need of an urgent advice interview.
- Operation of a signposting and referral system to advice services in partnership with other agencies

The weekly hours are: 9.am- 10.00am (elderly clients only) and 2.00pm – 3.00pm (all clients).

Also, additional appointments were added to our drop in surgeries (20- minute appointments) helping an additional 15 clients per week.

Leaflets have been produced, translated into the Polish language and distributed to over 1000 of our beneficiaries covering pressing subjects such as National Minimum Wage, Sickness at Work, Maternity Rights, Worker Registration Scheme and Residence Permit and Taxation in the UK.

Our Information website has been extended and is now available in English, and two other East European languages (Polish and Russian).

Developing partnerships

EEAC actively looks for ways to forge new links with other organisations helping East Europeans and, through these links, wants to help to disseminate information about sources of advice and assistance that are available to them.

Co-operation with other agencies has continued to be developed, in particular with the Hammersmith & Fulham Refugee Forum, Hammersmith & Fulham Community Law Centre, Iranian Association, Learn Direct and Primus Personnel.

EEAC understands that only in working actively in partnerships can the delivery of the service and client support be of the highest value.

Internal and external factors

Fundraising

EEAC is an independent registered charity reliant on the support of wide range of funders.

We are only too well aware of the financial pressures experienced by major funders, and in view of this have taken a number of measures to seek additional sources of funding for our services.

During 2006/07 we were unable to secure funding from Big Lottery from the Reaching Communities funding stream. The funding would have paid for a number of specialist advisers.

However we did not get discouraged for long and motivated by the pressing needs of our community and the hard work and commitment of staff we were successful in securing a range of funds from trusts and foundations.

Next year we are planning to expand our funding range to include grants from local authorities and the European Social Fund. To increase our unrestricted funds we hope to explore possibilities of generating income from memberships and trading activities.

We are also planning to develop a comprehensive Fundraising Strategy and develop new funding partnerships.

Quality accreditations

Maintaining internal quality accreditation is essential for EEAC.

In December 2006 we passed Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) Level 1 Competence Quality Audit allowing our advisers to give Immigration advice to a quality level set by the OISC. We continued to maintain audit standards with the Community Legal Services, Quality Mark Standard, for record checking, independent file review and support for staff development needs.

Developing our people

EEAC provides training and skills development to all staff and volunteers. During 2006/07 we spent £1487 on training and developing of our staff, volunteers and management committee.

We encourage personal development through a flexible approach to training which helps them build skills and confidence at their own pace. 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.

Future plans

Four developments will affect the course of our activities over the coming period.

These are:

- the need to further broaden and diversify our funding base and to build up our reserves
- the need to extend our services in the South, East and North of London boroughs
- the need to provide case work in housing, welfare benefits and employment
- extending and sustaining our current and future partners

Statement of financial activities

Against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding, EEAC continued to plan and develop services. With the aid of sound financial management and the support of both its staff and management committee the organisation generated a positive financial outcome for the period.

In the financial year April 2006 /March 2007 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 the continuing support from London Council (£56,000) and Big Lottery Fund (£5869).

New application for grants were made and received from The City Bridge Trust (£33000), Comic Relief (£4924), Lloyds TSB (£5000) and Awards for All (£4988).

Small sources of funding came from private donations (£390)

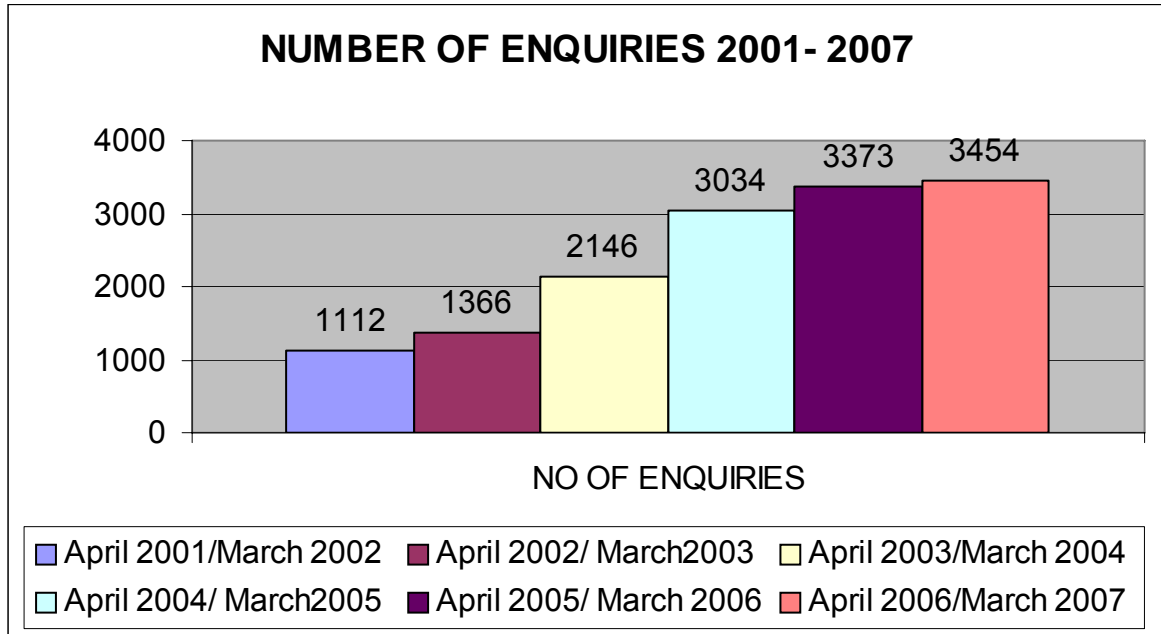
Total income for the financial year was £110175.

Total expenditure for the year April 2006/March 2007 amounted to £109,341 and was allocated to charitable activities, governance costs and the costs of generating funds.

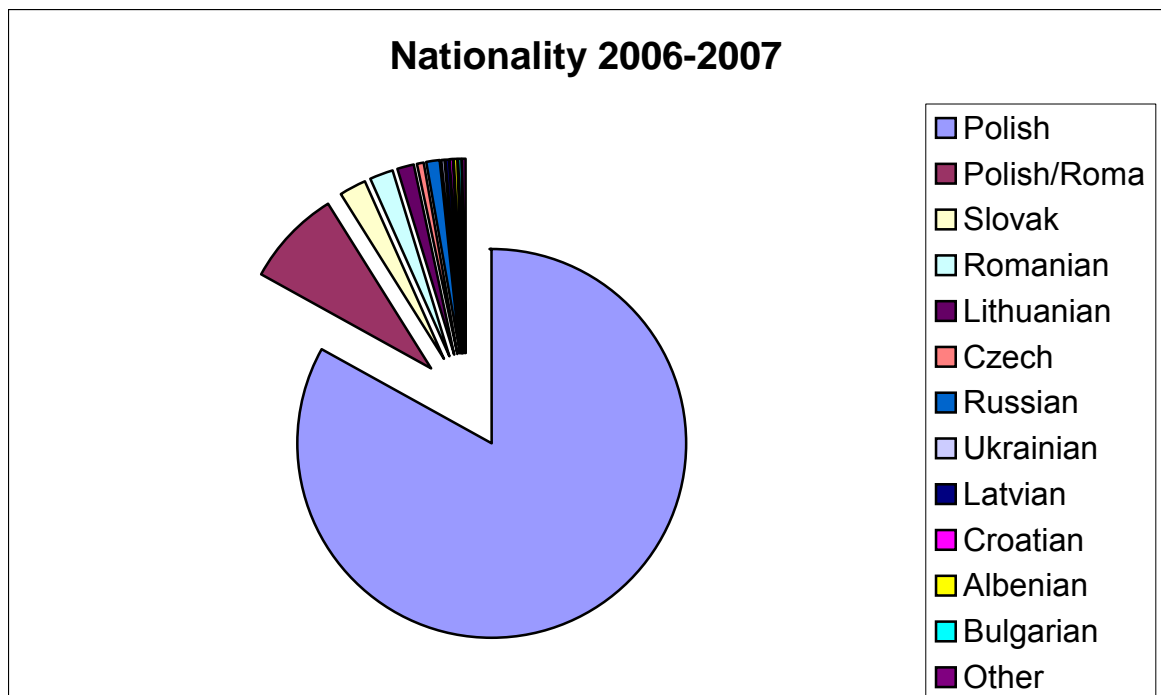
It should be noted that the full financial accounts of the organisation are filed separately and can be obtained upon request from the Co-ordinator.

Statistics

With the resources available at present, our Centre is working to its full capacity. Last year we saw only a slight increase in the number of enquiries dealt by our advisers. Additional funding is needed to secure funding for a new post to increase number of enquiries and therefore help more clients.



Following the accession of new member states into the EU, Polish migrants represent the largest migrant community in Greater London and the UK.



Acknowledgements

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

London Council

Big Lottery Fund

The City Bridge Trust

Lloyds TSB

Comic Relief

Awards for All

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

Hammersmith & Fulham Community Law Centre

Fulham Citizens Advice Bureau

Hammersmith & Fulham Refugee Forum

Advice Now

Pearce & Glynn Solicitors

Powell, Spencer & Partners Solicitors

Home Office – Immigration Team

Hammersmith & Fulham – Housing Services and Homeless Person Unit

Job Centre Plus

Department of Work and Pensions

CITAS

ACAS

Havelock Family Centre

Shepherds Bush Advice Centre

Federation of Poles in Great Britain

Advice UK

Office of the Immigration Services Commissioners

Community Legal Services

LASA

Child Poverty Action Group

Primus Personnel

Iranian Association

AIRA

Private donations:

Mr Andrzej Łapczyński

Mrs Krystyna Dąbrowska

Mrs Jan Rymszewicz

Useful contacts

Management committee members

Gera Drymer (Chair)
Donald Kendrick (Vice- Chair)
Elizabeth Vadillo (Treasurer)
Brian Reed (Secretary)

Liliana Kowalewska
Krystyna Bell
Krystyna Olliffe
Wiesław Pawluczyk
Marek Jakubowski

Team Co-ordinator

Magdalena Dykier

Staff

Dana Jozefkowicz
Elizabeth El Ansari

Volunteers

Katarzyna Adamkiewicz
Danuta Nahani
Anna Suchocka
Ewa Jozefkowicz
Evelina Simkute
William Leung
Izabela Hajkowska
Malgorzata Orska
Bartek Oscilowski
Katarzyna Dziadel
Lily Mirzoian
Karolina Ossowska

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