



# **2007-2008 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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# 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 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 with the review of our Business Plan for the next three years. We also continue to work with and establish new 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 the 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

Whatever plans we make, changes in the external environment constantly influence our organisation: reducing or expanding funding streams, changing government and regulatory priorities or policies, shifting social attitudes, new technologies, and so on.

2007/2008 was a successful year as we continued to strengthen our position within the voluntary and community sector and make the most of the arising opportunities. Our greatest achievement was to secure funding for the first time from Hammersmith & Fulham Council.

The most important drivers for change affecting our organisation were:

1. The rising need for advice services  
The demand for our services has been growing steadily over the years and has accelerated significantly since the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004. The opening up of the labour market brought about increased numbers of East Europeans seeking employment in the UK, with associated needs welfare benefit advice, housing and employment.
2. Funding of advice services  
Securing funding has been an essential part of our organisation's survival and success strategy. This involves understanding how the funding environment is changing and what funders might choose to prioritise for the future.
3. How advice is delivered  
The changing expectations of our users as well as new ways to deliver advice required our organisation to respond and adapt in order to continue providing an effective and innovative service.
4. The workforce  
It has been important to understand challenges faced by management and staff. We encouraged personal development through a flexible approach to training which helps staff and volunteers to build skills and confidence at their own pace.

# Our key achievements

## **Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO) Level 1**

PQASSO is the most widely used and recognised external quality assurance system within the third sector.

Following an external audit in 2008 against the PQASSO Quality Mark standard we were commended for our good working practices and good governance.

The assessment process promoted organisational learning, improved the efficiency of the services we provide and greatly motivated staff and volunteers.

## **BMER Advice Network (BAN) Membership and Partnership working**

BAN links EEAC with other well established partners offering a combination of generalist and specialist levels of legal advice in housing, immigration, benefits, health, education, employment, immigration and asylum. The well-established partners are all quality assured with Quality Mark and OISC exemption. The partnership promotes access to good quality culturally appropriate advice services to all Londoners, fosters closer working relationships amongst partner organisations and provides a voice for the BAME-led advice sector in London.

## **The Social Enterprise Concept**

Social Enterprise was set up in accordance with the rules of the Charity Commission and our current funders and provided an additional income stream for the long term sustainability of the organisation. The concept has the primarily social objective of primarily re-investing surpluses for the purpose of the organisation and its core values.

We are aware that Social Enterprise is not a quick fix to funding problems as it can take years before trading activities become profitable.

In this financial year we introduced membership fees and out of hours additional advice services.

## **Volunteer programme**

The charity makes significant use of volunteers both in terms of support roles (e.g. receptionists, ICT roles, administration, PR, specialist projects) and in the provision of its services. At the end of the financial year the organisation had 23 volunteers (including trustees attending Management Committee meetings). The volunteers, excluding the trustees, are equivalent to 2 full time staff and the estimated value of volunteer inputs is assessed at £53,000. Volunteers are an integral part of the service delivery by the charity.

## **Extension of services**

Last year we extended our advice and support services for hard to reach clients

offering contact with our Centre electronically, via e-mail. This greatly improved access to and effectiveness of general information provided, communication between client and adviser, and saved time by distributing information much more quickly to many more people.

### **Health Seminars**

In partnership with the Afaya Trust and Hammersmith & Fulham PCT we ran free Cancer Awareness Seminars for the Polish Community. The purpose of this project was to raise awareness about cancer, provide information and increase understanding about different cancers most commonly found within the Polish Community. The seminars were very well attended.

### **Increasing the number of clients helped**

With the dedication, commitment and hard work of staff and volunteers, last year we dealt with helped 3393 individual cases. The largest numbers of enquiries were made in the areas of Welfare Benefits, Housing and Employment. Our advice staff achieved 80% success rate in appealing against negative decisions for Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit.

## **Internal and external factors**

### **Fundraising**

EEAC is an independent registered charity and charitable company, 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 2007/08 we had been successful for the first time in securing funding from Hammersmith & Fulham Council and City Parochial Foundation.

We have developed a comprehensive 3 years Fundraising Strategy to help us with fundraising efforts.

### **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.

# Future plans

Five developments will affect the course of our activities over the coming period. These are:

1. to broaden and diversify our funding base and build up our reserves through the social enterprise concept
2. to find funding to support and extend the provision of health advice
3. to continue to improve access to advice through our volunteer recruitment and training programme.
4. to collaborate with other advice agencies and partner organizations.
5. to find adequate and secure office space.

## Statement of financial activities

The full financial statements were approved by the trustees on the 19 November 2008. They have been sent to the Charity Commission and Registrar of Companies.

The financial statements have been audited by Judith Brookfield, Chartered Accountant & Registered Auditors 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 2007/March 2008 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 support from London Council (£56000) the City Bridge Trust (£21750), LB Hammersmith & Fulham (£9000). Small sources of unrestricted funding came from our social enterprise activities including advice consultancy and membership fees (£1499) Grants and donations carried forward from previous year (£21986)

Total income for the financial year was £110235.

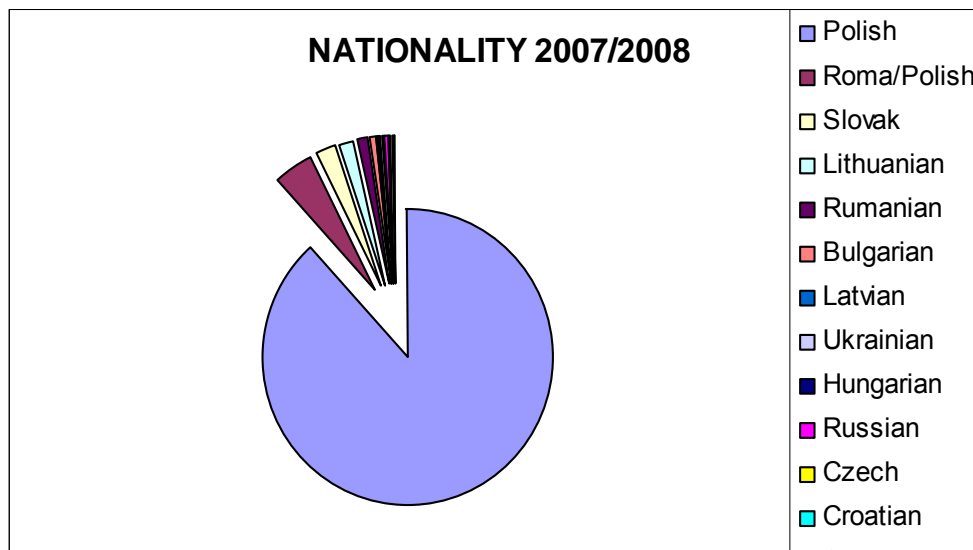
Total expenditure for the year April 2007/March 2008 amounted to £100977 and was allocated to charitable activities (£98808) and governance costs (£2169)

# Statistics

With the resources available at present, our Centre is working to its full capacity. Over the past 5 years we have seen a significant increase in the number, nature and complexity of enquiries especially in the areas of welfare benefits, employment and housing. That shift had a direct link with the accession of East European countries in May 2004.

The statistics below give overall figures to demonstrate that shift.

| Case                     | 2003/2004    | 2004/2005    | 2005/2006    | 2006/2007    | 2007/2008    |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Welfare benefits         | 542          | 747          | 1049         | 1212         | 1368         |
| Immigration              | 287          | 279          | 298          | 220          | 218          |
| Housing                  | 186          | 211          | 369          | 389          | 396          |
| Translation/Interpreting | 327          | 570          | 502          | 455          | 362          |
| Employment               | 54           | 290          | 338          | 321          | 425          |
| Education                | 58           | 85           | 98           | 67           | 57           |
| Debt                     | 62           | 137          | 150          | 167          | 175          |
| Health/Community care    | 0            | 123          | 145          | 225          | 217          |
| Legal                    | 0            | 101          | 89           | 99           | 73           |
| General                  | 0            | 491          | 335          | 299          | 102          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>2,146</b> | <b>3,034</b> | <b>3,373</b> | <b>3,454</b> | <b>3,393</b> |



# Acknowledgements

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

London Councils

The City Bridge Trust

Hammersmith & Fulham Council

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

Advice UK

Iranian Association

ACAS

Pearce & Glynn Solicitors

Powell, Spencer & Partners Solicitors

Polish Psychological Club

Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in London

Polish Restaurant “Maja”

Polish Psychologists’ Club

Hammersmith & Fulham Community Law Centre

Fulham Citizens Advice Bureau

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)

Liliana Kowalewska  
Krystyna Bell  
Krystyna Olliffe  
Wiesław Pawluczyk  
Marek Jakubowski

### **Manager**

Magdalena Dykier

### **Staff**

Dana Jozefkowicz  
Elizabeth El Ansari

### **Volunteers**

Anna Kochanowska Evangelista Fernandes  
Alena Szaboova  
Malgorzata Rush  
Malgorzata Pakulska  
Daniel Tiles  
Iris Radulian  
Zofia Idzikowska  
Anna Hamre  
Malgorzata Symeryak  
Wanda Gerzon  
Izabela Packowska  
Malgorzata Orska  
Bartek Oscilowski  
Katarzyna Dziadel  
Lily Mirzoian  
Karolina Ossowska

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