



2005-2006 Annual Report

Registered Charity No. 295854

Member of Advice UK

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CHAIR'S REPORT

Over the past year, the East European Advise Centre 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 in May 2004 has had very tangible impact on the scale and scope of the need for our services. Whilst a large number of clients continue to need advise 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. This is a reflection of the changes brought about by the opening up of opportunities for nationals from eight (formerly) east European countries. 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 been able to step in and offer positive intervention enabling clients to find way back into employment and secure accommodation.

Last year was also marked by our vigorous work to secure funding for the future. We depend on grants and have set out a clear strategy to ensure that our fundraising activity is underpinned by clear objectives formulated into clear projects.

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.

Gera Drymer
Chair

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FOREWORD

The biggest wave of immigration in British history, as reported by the UK Government, underlines the fact that we live in a multicultural society and all of us, coming from very different origins must learn to live together in harmony.

The East European Advice Centre plays a major part in bringing about better relations between individuals and between different communities. Our whole ethos is about helping East Europeans living and/or working in the UK to exercise their rights and responsibilities and to obtain fair treatment under the law, thereby improving lives. We always look for the practical ways in which to support our beneficiaries, who make such a positive contribution to the UK economy and society.

Last year our Centre faced a number of issues underlining the fact that we live in a world in which people are often disadvantaged, harassed, exploited and even attacked because of their ethnicity or nationality.

Here are some of the challenges, which our organisation had to overcome and a number of initiatives we had to take to meet those challenges.

CHALLENGES

The phenomenal influx of workers following the last EU enlargement in May 2004, where actual numbers of around 600,000 far, far exceeded official estimates, has resulted in an increase in demand for the services of the East European Advice Centre. In 2005-2006 the scale of that increase has been very significant with the result that migrant workers now represent over 52% of the total clients in our Centre.

While much of that number has been the result of self-referral, our statistics show that a proportion was due to decisions by other bodies and agencies to redirect/refer clients to our Centre.

The nature of the challenges faced by the EEAC can be classified into three categories:

Management of the EEAC Centre

Challenges for staff/volunteers

The changing nature of problems

Management of EEAC business

Increasing numbers of East European migrants have posed daily challenges for the management of our Centre. A large and diverse range of clients with complex issues has resulted in longer advice sessions and in consequence increased waiting times for other clients. This, together with a tendency for East Europeans to attend advice sessions in groups has also led to overcrowding in waiting rooms, which in turn has been a source of stress and subsequent tension amongst other clients.

Challenges for staff and volunteers

Our staff and volunteers have experienced an increased pressure and resultant stress associated with the increasing number and diversity of clients needing to get information and advice from our Centre. Such problems have sometimes been exacerbated by high levels of frustration experienced by staff and volunteers about the adequacy of the help and support they were able to give to clients.

The changing nature of client problems

Our beneficiaries have not only increased numerically in the last two years but the nature of the issues being brought to our Centre has also changed. The impact of EU enlargement in May 2004 and evolving immigration rules and procedures for asylum seekers and refugees brought about a migrant population with different languages, cultures and family structures. Employment (a major concern), together with problems surrounding housing, benefits and immigration, has been prevalent on the list of issues.

INITIATIVES

The challenges posed by migrants coming from Eastern Europe have generated a range of initiatives. These reflect the scale and intensity of the issues, the resources available to respond, the support from the wider voluntary and statutory community and, inevitably, the energy and commitment of staff and volunteers working within the EEAC.

Interpretation/ Translation

To better address the growing need for language and communication we have engaged and trained 16 volunteers who can speak a range of East European languages. Those volunteers provided help and support on both general information and interpretation of letters and forms and translation of information leaflets to our beneficiaries.

Our staff also speaks two other East European Languages to ensure that our clients fully understand the true nature and extent of the issues on which they are seeking help and advice, and any implications for their situation.

Leaflets

The use of leaflets translated into other East European languages has been very helpful for a large number of clients. We have produced leaflets on a number of pressing issues affecting our clients such as Maternity Rights, National Minimum Wage and Sickness at Work.

Our Centre has worked with partners, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Advice Now, to provide approved versions of their information leaflets where our Centre provided translation of those leaflets into East European languages.

Telephone enquiry line

A daily telephone enquiry line has been set up to aid dissemination of information mainly to difficult-to-reach clients. This initiative proved to be very cost and time effective, as a much greater number of beneficiaries living in the outer boroughs of London have access to good information/advice. The telephone enquiry line is available from 2.00pm – 3.00pm and is answered by a qualified adviser.

Website

We have set up an information- and signposting-based website and have translated its entire content into Polish, as at the moment most of our clients come from Poland. The website is easy to operate and clients can fully access and understand information they are being provided with.

The largest section of the website is committed to providing answers to the most frequently asked questions in the areas of Welfare Benefits, Employment and Housing. www.eeac.org.uk

Investors In People Award

The effort and commitment of EEAC in motivating, training and developing staff and volunteers has been recognised by our achievement of Investors in People in October 2005. This award shows that our staff and volunteers acquire the necessary information and advice from external professional sources and also serves as a spur to and a means towards overall service improvement.

Outreach services

As part of our outreach services our volunteers and advice workers have visited 72 elderly, disabled and housebound clients, many of them with physical and mental disabilities and many with language and cultural barriers separating them from the rest of the community.

This project has led to increased self-esteem and self-confidence in our clients. It has reduced the burden on the other services provided by EEAC, which elderly people used inappropriately, as they simply sought social contact.

Links with other organisations

EEAC has looked for ways to forge links with other organisations helping East Europeans and, through these links, has helped to disseminate information about sources of advice and assistance that are available to them. Last year we linked with organisations such as Advice Now and the Federation of Poles in Great Britain.

Future plans

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

- the coming accession of two more East European countries (Bulgaria and Romania) to the European Union, with the likely pressure on our services that this will bring
- the need to broaden and diversify our funding base and to build up our reserves
- the ending in the next financial year of present funding from our two main funding organisations, the Association of London Government (now London Councils) and the Big Lottery Fund. We see the new bidding round that will follow as an opportunity to improve and extend our services, to develop as an organisation and to offer our services nationally
- the hoped-for completion of the process by which we will become a limited company with charitable status.

Statement of financial activities

In the financial year April 2005/March 2006 EEAC's main funding has come from two sources, in both cases in the form of grants. These are the Association of London Government (£56,000) and the Big Lottery Fund (£54,965). We have also received £690 from interest and private donations.

The total income was £111,655.

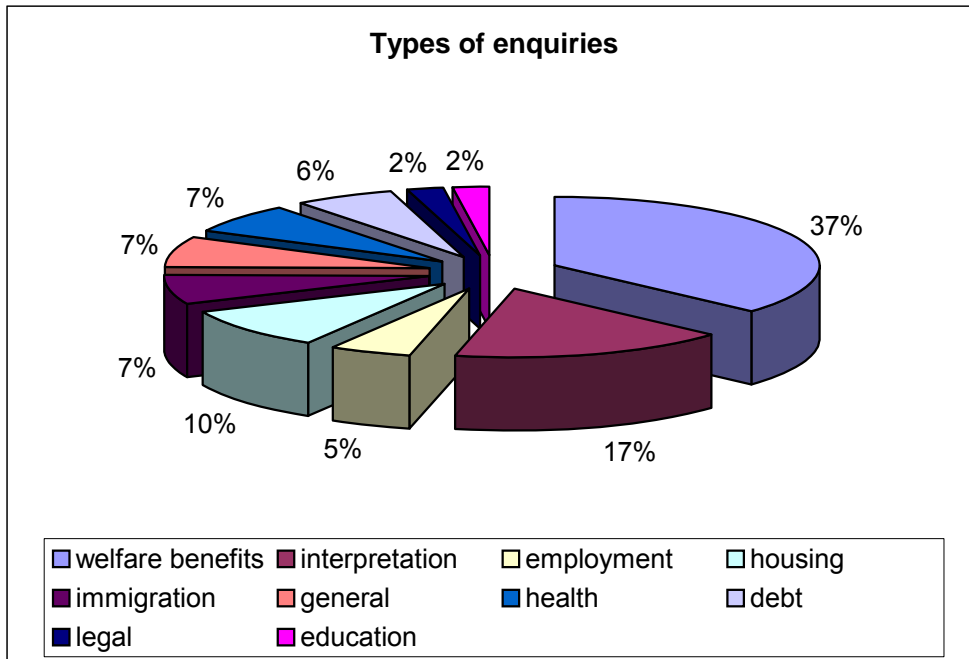
These grants will come to an end in the coming financial year. The Management Committee are in the process of planning bids for new funding and regard this bidding round as an opportunity to further improve the charity's organisation and services and to widen the range of its activities. The Committee is also aware of the need to broaden EEAC's funding base and is researching a range of funding organisations to bid to whose priorities are in line with its own.

Total expenditure for the year April 2005/March 2006 amounted to £117,659.

Statistics

Breakdown of enquiry types

Between April 2005 and March 2006 we saw an 11% increase in the number of enquiries in comparison to last year figures.



Breakdown of number and method of contacts made with our Centre

	45 MIN ADVICE	15 MIN DROP IN	15 MIN PHONE	2 HOURS OUTREACH	WRITING/ E-MAILS	TOTAL
FUNDER ALG	533	489	351	71	1	1445
FUNDER BLF	201	230	745	1	7	1184
TOTAL	734	719	1096	72	8	2629
%	27.9	27.3	41.7	2.8	0.3	100

Acknowledgements

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

Association of London Government (now London Councils)
Big Lottery Fund

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

Hammersmith & Fulham Law Centre
Hammersmith & Fulham Citizens Advice Bureau
Advice Now
Pearce & Glynn Solicitors
Powell, Spencer & Partners Solicitors
Home Office – Immigration Team
Hammersmith & Fulham – Asylum Team
Job Centre Plus
Department of Work and Pensions
Hammersmith Refugee Forum
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

Private donations:

Mr Andrzej Łapczyński
Mr Władysław Grucela
Mrs Ewa Luty
Mrs Krystyna Dąbrowska
Mrs Bożena Labińska

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

Izabela Kisielewska
Katarzyna Adamkiewicz
Joanna Bujak
Marzena Krasinska
Danuta Nahani
Katarzyna Dziadel
Anna Suchocka
Milena Alieova
Ewa Jozefkowicz
Krystyna Kozłowska
Evelina Simkute
William Leung
Bartek Oscilowski
Izabela Peckwska
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