## WLEC Annual Report 2019-20



"An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be"





# In Memoriam Raymond Ricky Singh

29<sup>th</sup> March 1949 -27<sup>th</sup> March 2020

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## **Chair's Report -Ian Potts**

Welcome to the 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts. The situation is somewhat odd due to the Coronavirus epidemic. The results for the year are very satisfactory showing a surplus of £65,000 and much of the credit must go to our late Director Mr Ricky Singh and our current acting Director and Treasurer Ms Barbara Karayi. The epidemic hardly affected that year but has been very significant in the current year.

The references to Ricky and Barbara above illustrate what has happened in the new year. Firstly, Ricky, who already suffered from asthma, was struck down with the virus and was one of Ealing's first deaths. We have seen a major turnaround in the Association's situation under Ricky and I must pay tribute to all he did for us, which is more detailed in the enclosed tribute. On Ricky going into hospital I asked Barbara to look after things and, on his death, took chair's action to appoint Barbara as acting Director, which was confirmed by the Executive. This meant that Barbara could no longer be a member of the executive as she was now an employee so I also asked the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Peter John, to take her place on the executive and the executive elected him to the vacancy.

In response to the epidemic the University closed Villiers House, so we moved our work onto telephone and e-mail and informed all our funders that we were so doing. The University is now planning to reopen Villiers House and so we will soon be able to restore face to face working. All our staff have been working extra hard under the circumstances and I would like to record my thanks to them all for how they have been coping.

You will remember that a couple of years ago our past chair Mr Peter Jones died. We discovered that he had included us in his will and we received £53,000 from his estate, in the current financial year. Ricky and I had discussed putting this money aside as a special memorial fund to Peter, which could only be used for special activities or in emergencies. When we received the money I proposed to the Executive that we should now set the account up as a memorial fund to both Peter and Ricky and I am inviting those who knew Ricky to make donations to the fund in Ricky's memory – an action which I will initiate myself in memory of both of them.

#### Ian Potts,

Chair 2019-20



Barbara Karayi at EUSS Event

## Acting Director's Report -Barbara Karayi

This is the bit where Ricky would previously have reported on the past year at West London Equality Centre, I will now be fulfilling his part.

Tears still come to my eyes when I think about how I came to be taking over from Ricky. While we worked together he trained me well, so it was a natural step, in the early panicky days of the pandemic that I was suited best, for now, to be director. Within a couple of days we had mail forwarding organised, everyone had a work phone, laptops were ordered, while we were intensely grieving.

I am extremely grateful for the mentoring, the feedback, support and encouragement I have had from Ricky in our 10 years together at Ealing Equality Council and West London Equality Centre. He always pointed out to me where I had improved a skill and recognised my contribution, let me take responsibility and grow. And he did this to everyone.

WLEC has changed considerably in my time here, from 2 paid staff, 4 desks with 6 people squashed together, to 8 paid staff now, and room to accommodate students, do meetings, training and presentations, and give them real work experience. We have gone from Ricky's fantastic 4 (Sumerum, Irfan, Farah and myself, largely unpaid) to the Team Fabulous we are today, thanks to Edmund, Paula, Adrienne, Alejandra, Gamila, Mojdeh and Julita.

Ricky and I until March this year would often sit by his desk in our office, discussing something or other, and both have tears in our eyes with pride when volunteers would pop their heads in to ask us a question and we could see how inspired and motivated they were helping people resolve their issues. All this assisted by our ablest staff we can imagine, who were all volunteers once, and continue to go above and beyond to ensure clients get what they deserve, by which I and the trustees are humbled.

What Ricky has built is incredible, and I am aiming to keep the boat afloat - with support from staff and trustees, this has so far worked out.

We have obtained several funds, with the help of Paul Bradford as a volunteer bid writer, and have been able to extend 2 projects. We have a volunteer professional finance person, Caroline Lumb, who has spent much time and energy ensuring our books are now kept in a more efficient way using an electronic platform our auditors also use.

During the time covered by the report we had 2 more staff join us to run the EU Settlement Scheme project for vulnerable people together with ECVS, which allowed us to build connections with Ealing and Hounslow councils. We found out that we inherited some money from one of our former trustees, Peter Jones, for which we are truly grateful. Our Chair Ian Potts has been a regular presence in the office which has been very helpful in my role as treasurer.

### Barbara Karayi

### **Our Work and Volunteering Programmes**

Over the past years at WLEC, we have been able to help many individuals to upskill themselves and thereby obtain gainful employment or enter into further education.

We are also helping law students to qualify as solicitors via the SRA Equivalent Means Period of Recognised Training route. Currently, we have the highest number of candidates ever who are working towards qualifying as solicitors through WLEC under the dedicated supervision of our most senior solicitor, Bernard Andonian, and Barbara Karayi, herself one of the success stories of this scheme.

Our Community Advice Programme, CAP, attracts law students from the University of West London, from other neighbouring universities, as well as volunteers from the community who use their skills and trainings to help our various clients.



Staff and Volunteers Busy at Work

## **Seminar and Training**

Our student volunteer and training programme is robust. WLEC conducts a weekly training session for all students and volunteers covering topics in several areas of law.



Staff and Volunteers in Training



Immigration Training with Bernard Andonian



Students and Volunteers in Housing Training



Training Day

#### Snapshot of Year 2019-2020 Enquiries in Numbers

Total Telephone Enquiries: 6369

Of a Sample 886 Casework:

Area of Law	
Housing	214
Employment	74
Family	76
Immigration	81
Welfare and Bene-	
fits	121
Harassment	15
Discrimination	19
HTC	24
Consumers	30
EUSS	8
Hate Crime	108
WINDRUSH	1
Others	115
Total	886

#### Ethnicity

Black	228
White	209
Asian	170
Middle E.	89
Other	16
Unstated	174
Total	886

Sex

Male	291
Female	339
Unstated	256
Total	886

### Below are examples and experiences of some persons engaged in our training into work and volunteering programme

#### Sandy

I have continued to volunteer at WLEC, mainly doing admin work and some proofreading. Then the country

went into lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so we couldn't go into the office any more. The staff and volunteers have kept in touch with weekly Zoom training sessions. These have been very instructive about different aspects of the law and have been a valuable way of keeping in contact with everybody.

The biggest shock to us all came in late March when we learned of the death of our CEO Ricky Singh, from COVID-19. We knew he was in hospital but we hoped he would get well and come home again. It has been a very strange time for everybody, but I feel that we won't really come to terms with Ricky's death until we are back in the office and he isn't there.

Ricky always made me feel special. I thought it was because we were both of the same generation and I could appreciate his cultural references and knew most of the song lyrics he quoted. But I have since realised that Ricky made everybody feel special. He had such a warm way of relating to people. He knew the law and was a true believer in human rights, but I think his greatest attribute was how much he valued people and encouraged them to achieve their goals. He also said that he learned something new every day.

WLEC will never be the same again without Ricky. RIP Ricky. **Sandy Derbyshire** 

#### Ash

I chose to volunteer with WLEC to gain legal experience and also to contribute positively to my

society. In my time volunteering, I have learnt to manage the multi-line phone system, gained experience in scheduling appointments, drafting letters, supporting other case workers with case management and legal research.

I have excelled at prioritising tasks, demonstrating management skills and effective communication, which I am grateful for. I have also had the opportunity to work on various cases, one involving a client who was unfairly dismissed. From this opportunity, I have learnt the importance of effective communication with clients and understanding their objectives.

I have acquired knowledge to be more efficient to undertake research, and handle sensitive information. I have received outstanding support and mentorship from the team. WLEC weekly training sessions helped me to develop essential skills and knowledge to advance my legal career.

Finding the right words to mark the passing of Ricky is difficult, emotions run high. Ricky was full of life and energy, he has mentored me and he was there any time when I needed help. All I can say is that I wish I had more time to appreciate him when he was among us. **Ashkan Mahdizadeh** 

#### Hilary

Ricky's hard work and dedication to WLEC will never be forgotten by all who had the privilege and pleasure of knowing him. I will always remember too, his patience and support of students he mentored and saw the enormous beneficial effects both to their confidence and to their future employment prospects. A tragic loss to us all. **Hilary Panford** 

#### Milena

I decided to volunteer with WLEC because I met some representatives of the organisation at the university volunteering fair and I was very intrigued by the way I heard it runs by helping people in need.

I have learned various pieces of crucial information from our weekly training. I have also learned how to approach cases and find a solution even when there seems not to be one.

I have worked on two cases that have both had a successful outcome. I have learned a lot of problemsolving skills and also gained a lot of confidence, as I was given the chance to work on my own cases very early on, which I am extremely grateful for.

I have developed a lot of confidence in myself, organisational skills and I believe I have become even more determined and unwilling to give up.

I am currently a third-year law student at the university and also have a part-time job on the side of volunteering.

I will always remember Ricky. On my first shift, he made me feel very welcome and comfortable. He gave me some great advice and told me that he knows I will one day be a great person, if I work hard, which gave me a great boost of confidence and motivation.

He was always an extremely joyful person who could always put a smile on your face even on a bad day. He brought great energy and knowledge to our weekly meetings and was a pleasure to be around. **Milena Rohzin** 



Volunteer Training with Met Police Hate Crime Liaison Officer PC Peter Trueman



Celebrating with Bernard Andonian

## Obi

Over a year ago, I chose to come to West London Equality Centre (WLEC) as a volunteer so as to avail myself of practical experience.

The engagement in WLEC despite the corona pandemic, has been an experience that will alternate the two-year-training-contract mandated by Solicitors Regulatory Authority so as to be licensed as a Solicitor after my successful Legal Practice Course.

In this my second annual report, I must highlight that the experience of my first year of involvement at the centre, regular attendance accorded me the opportunity to meet on the work with all the older volunteers that make up the experienced team of free Legal Advisers serving the public on Hate related crimes, Housing Law, Family, Social Welfare, EU settlement and Consumer Law. The system operational in WLEC is an integrated approach that accorded me an opportunity from day one to be involved in the dispensation of Legal Advice to clients with the experienced staff who themselves are Lawyers, Solicitors and Trainees, Barristers, a Judge and caseworker-professionals of different specialisations. Together with other volunteers, I conduct interviews, record the client's enquiries, seek Supervisor's instructions and offer legal advice.

The exposure to clients and dispensation of legal advice has improved my confidence, communication and writing skills. I was afraid the first day I was asked to sit close to the telephone so as to answer calls. I made mistakes initially but after the early days, just like in the interview sessions, I was able to note the enquiries of clients over the phone, record the messages, transfer the calls and obtain quick advice where necessary and give out advice and/or appointments.

The hallmark of the learning experience I have gained so far is that I have given appointments to clients who I can say are clients in conjunction with a Supervisor who oversees my activities. The last case I handled was that of Ms E N who approached us with a case of total disrepair of her property and is asking her Landlords to act on their obligations as to repair by virtue of their Tenancy Agreement. This case reached the stage that the Landlord agreed to repair and settle to avoid an escalation and/or referral to the Ombudsman. The client was happy with our tenacity and consistency in the communication with the Landlords without which they may never do the needful of attending to the repairs. What I have learnt in this case is that I need to follow up a case by attending to my client's interest. The draft letters to both the client and her Landlords were edited by my senior colleagues and from the replies, I could see the difference between a letter written by a Lawyer and others not exposed to my experience in WLEC.

I am developing successfully a positive image of the future as a Solicitor. Thanks to the team that are tireless in putting me through the filing system, recordings, public speaking through the interviews and participation in the training sessions.

A bunch of post-mortem thanks (rest his soul) to our beloved Director, Ricky Singh, who sadly passed away in March of this year. I had sought his advice one Saturday at the University concerning a debt issue and a possible practical experience. His care and welcome to West London Equality Centre has been a big boost to my legal career for which I will ever remain grateful. Without Ricky, I would not have met the senior Advisers that have stopped at nothing in directing me on the right route to success in practical Law practice. I look forward to dedicating my licence as Solicitor to the memory and pray for the eternal repose of Ricky; strength to his family and a continuation of the mantra "readiness to learn" at the WLEC.

The successful completion of my LLM programme late 2109 has opened my eyes to an aspiration towards a PhD programme: I am into the Volunteer work with the WLEC, have successfully launched my fourth book (MANhandlers) and doing part-time work as Security

Officer as well as searching for a Law-related part-time work...probably, a paralegal role. However, WLEC will remain a long term associate-organisation for me in the practice of Law after Solicitor-License. Achelus Chibuzo Obi .

#### Maggie

In a short span, and working part-time, I have definitely got my confidence back to work, to listen, follow and learn from my seniors and more. I have especially enjoyed, and attended all of the training Zoom meetings. Particular ones have been (i) Furlough, which I shared with friends, explaining in the layman's language what it meant to the people who were affected, (ii) Employment Law presentation, (iii) Domestic Violence training, (iv) Judge Bernard's presentation on Windrush, which was excellent, (v) Privacy Law, presented by myself as my contribution to this series, (vi) And another lecture with Kuldip, law teacher and a practising Barrister, on Police Powers and the definitions of Assault & battery and Arrest under the English Law, I found also fascinating.

I am looking forward to actually working on my own cases. So far, I have worked on Employment law under the umbrella of Paula and helped others whenever I was asked. I did the re: IB case and an amount of research on the appeal of E J. For Edmund, drafting a letter before action in a contractual breach matter. I have also enjoyed meeting clients, engaging in client interview, taking notes, etc. In the short span of time from January till March before lockdown the situation, alas (besides washing up and making the tea!) Simply, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel now. Being a mature person, I am grateful to have the opportunity to work in a field about which I am very passionate and to become a qualified practising solicitor. I see too the importance of people and organisations such as ours making the law work for real people. And inspired with the hard work and devotion some volunteers are giving. And trying my best to be a successful part of the team and help to make CAP a success as Ricky wanted.

Currently since the lockdown, I have never missed any Zoom meetings that I am invited to attend, I make sure I am always present on the meetings even if abroad. I am still spending time studying for my NY Bar Exam, which we as foreigners are not allowed to travel to America for at the moment because of Covid.

I did a Paper on Privacy Laws and the presentation was on one of our Wednesday Zoom meetings. It was a research from an International Perspective and Judge Bernard was kind enough to say it was very well researched. I hope to do more and contribute to the Zoom meetings on other topics too.

I cannot conclude this without mentioning our dear departed Ricky, I met Ricky and Bernard at the Law dinner in November 2018, at West London University, my alma mater. Ricky gave me the opportunity to come and work as a Volunteer while I was busy studying for my American Bar exam, looking for a way to qualify as a Solicitor since I had had no luck as a mature student getting a training contract. I was on and off coming to the office until, in December, before I went for Christmas holidays in 2019, he offered me the opportunity to qualify via the alternative means route. I was Thrilled!

The last time I spoke to him was on 12th. March and I said I was going home for Easter. He replied "I want to go for a break to Spain in April, but my wife will not allow me because of Coronavirus". Sadly, he passed away at the end of March with the illness. These were early days and very cruel to switch his ventilator off.

In my opinion Ricky gave Individual attention to everyone and made them feel important. A very good sense of humour he had.

Ricky has left a great mark on my life. Two people have made a difference in my life. and Ricky was one of them. As a mature person, I could never think of being given opportunities that he did. He knew how passionate I was and my potential about qualifying as a lawyer and more so travelling from France with my (then) little baby every week to attend classes for the Legal Practice Course at West London.

Ricky knew. Perhaps that is why he gave me a hope which I never expected. He is truly a wind under my wings. RIP, daily I remember you in my prayers. I will succeed for you, Ricky. **Margaret S Frearson** 

### Ali

I volunteer on the WLEC's Somali and Arabic Dadaal project working within the WLEC advice support in

providing a dedicated support service for Somali and Arabic speaking clients. The range of assistance covered form filling, letter writing, mediation, signposting, interpretation and translation.

For the last 12 months period, we had a total client enquiry of 1832, via face to face and telephone requests for advice and assistance. Of these, 130 were supported with online forms filling or letter writing, 78 were for Housing related issues including disrepair, Housing Benefits (HB), Locata and Discretionary Housing Payments, (DHP), 52 were for letter writing in relation to general matters, 30 were in regards to Personal Independent Payment, (PIP) forms filling and 7 were for self-employment fund applications.

We also had 30 employment related enquiries, 20 on Universal Credit, 4 concerning Children and Social Services matters. In the reporting period, we secured a total of  $\pounds 6800.00$  in DHP fund for a tenant and successfully appealed an overpayment claim of  $\pounds 3600$ and another  $\pounds 3150$  in other claims.

#### Ali Abdi



Team EUSS giving a presentation at UWL

## **COVID-19 Update**

As of 19th March 2020 WLEC has been operating from home, with each staff member and key volunteers having an office mobile phone, access to email, a database to record client data, mail forwarding, and regular and weekly zooms to keep services running, and allowing us to share and support each other. I am amazed at what we achieved in the first few heady days of lockdown.

This has led initially to a serious drop in enquiries as our clients often dropped in to the office or rang the office landline. It has not been possible to forward the office landline phone but our various office mobile numbers are advertised on the website, Facebook and Twitter.

Our projects, i.e. Hate Crime, Help Through Crisis and EU Settlement service have continued as before, with little change, and we have all adapted to handling clients slightly differently. At times it has been hard, especially in the beginning after Ricky passed away, when we were all in deep shock.

We have found sometimes that we needed to pass documents from client to staff or get a signature. We have managed all that with hopefully little risk, by wearing protective gear, wiping pens, using screens, meeting in cafes. As staff we have had several socially distanced meetings on Haven Green as we are all missing each other and our daily inspiring office interactions.

The Foodbanks have now returned to a face to face service so the Help Through Crisis team has been pioneering seeing clients directly, helping the most vulnerable achieve a better outcome for themselves.

Despite the Tier 2 alert for London, it is not anticipated that we will go into full lockdown again.

We are looking forward to reopening soon in a COVID-19 safe way, protecting clients and of course our staff and volunteers.



Poignant; Our Late Ricky Singh with Barbara,

## **Remembering Ricky**

## Social Media Tributes



West London Equality Centre @WLEquality

It is with great sadness that we have to tell you that our CEO Ricky Singh, mentor to many, has passed away yesterday from the Corona virus. We are devastated as is his family, made more difficult by social distancing and isolation. He dealt with the world with love and humanity.

15:12 · 28 Mar 20 · Twitter for Android

Sara Cooney @SaraCooney7 · 31 Mar Replying to @WLEquality So sorry to hear this. Ricky made a difference to so many people's lives. My thoughts are with his family and friends



Karen Skipper @KarenSkip... · 28 Mar · Replying to @WLEquality

I am so sorry to hear this. Ricky was an amazing equalities champion. Condolences to all from me personally and all @Spectra\_London



Susie D @SusieD\_LON · 28 Mar Replying to @WLEquality So very sorry to hear this. We @trustforlondon were looking forward to working with him. He showed such a clear commitment to training the next generation. Sending sincere condolences. Stay safe, folks :-(





That's such sad news - love from all at the Law Centre





Sara Cooney @SaraCooney7 · 31 Mar ∨ Replying to @WLEquality

So sorry to hear this. Ricky made a difference to so many people's lives. My thoughts are with his family and friends



jasbinderkaur @jasbinder43 · 28 Mar Replying to @WLEquality

RIP Ricky Singh remembering your inspiration and kindness 🙏

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Shaz Kaz My condolences to your family. You will be missed. Truly a great guy!	Rifat Sulieman Sheikh Can't believe it Ricky? RIP my old friend 🥹 29w Like Reply
Margaret Sharaf Frearson You were and still will be the wind beneath our wings. As Bernard said, we will make CAP a big success as you wanted it to be.Please give my heartfelt condolences to his widow.Thanks in sadness. RIP 20 20	Michael Goldberg So sad to hear of the passing of such a warm, compassionate person and an excellent, pragmatic lawyer. Ricky was always full of endless encouragement for everyone at CAP. He never missed an opportunity to share a smile remind us how proud he was of our work. A huge loss to us all.
Naziana Naz We are devastated to hear the sad news. Our sincere condolences to Sophia and family. RIP Ricky. Naziana & Jessica. 30w Like Reply 3 🗘	Marcele Barrett RIP boss you where a good man and help me out in my time of needs 30w Like Reply 2
Naz Kazmi Absolutely devastating news. Condolences to his family during this difficult time.	Matt Skinner This is awful. I have no words. Thoughts are with his family.

## **Project Reports**

Below are reports from staff members working on various projects that we are currently delivering under the funding of our various project funders.

## **European Union Settlement Scheme [EUSS]**

In June 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019 the EU Settlement Scheme was rolled out to provide all Europeans (EU, EEA) and their family members with a way to protect their rights as Europeans living in the UK, and give them the opportunity to continue living, working and studying in the United Kingdom. By being

registered under the scheme, these European citizens will be able to guarantee the same rights they had before Brexit. The scheme is run via an app and is very easy to use.

In June 2019, West London Equality Centre started the EU Settlement Scheme project together with ECVS (Ealing Community Voluntary Service) as lead partner. The Home Office funded 57 organisations all over the UK to help the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals in society to be registered under the scheme. We were committed to identify, support and accompany these people going through the process and become registered. It was a very big challenge, difficult and dramatic at times, but it was also good news at the end of the day for many people. We helped thousands of people obtain settled or pre-settled status and it is good to know we have helped protect their rights as Europeans living in the United Kingdom.

The people we were helping were vulnerable; that means they could be homeless, disabled, victims of modern slavery, children in foster care, victims of domestic abuse, or elderly. We had many cases in each category. We also identified other people showing signs of vulnerability, e.g. those with a language barrier (non-English speakers); those disadvantaged living in the extreme poverty, those that lived alone. Family members shown also signs of being considered as vulnerable as they sometimes must prove they are a family member of a European citizen, where paperwork may be hard to come by. We worked particularly with those who are Europeans of non-European origin who often are missed out by services run by their EU embassy in the UK.

In less than one year, from June 2019 to March 2020, before the project was coming to an initial end, West London Equality Centre surpassed the Home Office expectation by registering more than 1000 vulnerable citizens and supporting more that 6000 people with their applications. This was done by 3 staff, working flexibly, some studying on the side, and coordinating their efforts and their organisational skills to the best of their ability, to great success.

We were working hard trying to prevent a new Windrush Scandal, this time with the European citizens, as there is no physical proof, it is only an online checking system.

We are wondering about the people who will miss the opportunity to register. There are a lot of people living on their own, or isolated, or ill, or ignoring the day to day reality, those people possibly will have a problem if nobody alerts them about the Scheme. Furthermore, the EU Settlement Scheme does not have enough publicity or promotion on the news about the project. A degree of misinformation on social media turns the situation even worse.

The initial Home Office EU Settlement Scheme project was due to end by March 2020, however, the pandemic led the Home Office to extend the funding to the same organisations. This has now been reviewed and we have reapplied with Ealing Law Centre, and are happy to say, this project will continue until March 2021.

#### Some examples:

A relatively simple process of registration sometimes took many months to succeed. It was not as simple as the Home Office presented for most of our clients.

For Miss BB, an elderly women abandoned by her children, with language difficulties, not familiar with technology, on her own, with mobility difficulties and anxiety and depression, and with no access to public funds unless she got settled status, it was an 11 month wait until finally she got settled status.

For Miss JKL, a young girl in foster care, who lost her parents when she was five and put under the care of her uncle, from whom the police took her years later, and with, unfortunately, a wrong assigned carer by social services, it took eleven months for her to be settled.

For Miss KBN, victim of domestic violence, mother of three, without education and poor familiarity with technology, in a poor economic situation and marked by an oppressed life, it took a year to be settled.

For Mr MM, victim of modern slavery, elder, without family, with language difficulties, feeling punished by his difficult life, tired, it took nearly a year to be settled. The most beautiful end on each story was the happiness of each one of them, the hope that their lives become real for some, and this is the most important part of the project, the happy end of each process. Ricky Singh was very excited when we started the project. He could imagine how much we will help those people, the most vulnerable and forgotten in society. For Ricky, for his memory, we must do our best to get it done. Alejandra Vasquez



Alejandra and Julita, the EUSS Team

## Hate Crime Project

## Paula

Hate crimes are motived by prejudice towards certain groups because of who they are and can cause serious psychological damage to individual victims and the group as a whole. Such crimes entrench exclusion, hamper the development of a cohesive society and encourage discriminatory behaviour. Our Hate Crime Project is in its final year and we are taking the opportunity of providing an overview of the impact of the project during the previous 2 years. The main aim of the project was to assist victims of hate crimes and hate incidents in London Borough of Ealing ("Ealing") and surrounding boroughs, particularly, Hillingdon and Hounslow which, together with Ealing, form the West Area Borough Command Unit ("West Area BCU"). This is a relatively new structure, where local authorities are combined for the purpose of policing, in order to reducing overall spending. The West Area is one of the largest BCU in London.

In terms of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 ("the CDA") each local authority must work with the police and other essential service providers to develop a plan for the reduction of crime in their area. So, even though Ealing is part of the wider West Area BCU for policing purposes, the London Borough of Ealing has to implement its own crime reduction plan for the Borough. The legislation also allows for a combined plan for the BCU but this is not the case in the West Area BCU.

The Safer Ealing Partnership Board ("SEPB") is a statutory body established in terms of the CDA to develop a crime reduction plan for Ealing. Its members include the Metropolitan Police, Ealing Council, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Probation Service and the Ealing Clinical Commissioning Group. The WLEC sits on the SEPB which meets four times a year, for the purpose of reporting back on the effectiveness of existing crime reduction strategies and to obtain feedback and information from other co-opted members. Our presence on the SEPB has provided an opportunity for us to report the experiences of hate crime victims, within the criminal justice system, and to seek to address problems such as the underreporting of hate crimes, raising awareness and the police's response to victims.

The WLEC also chairs the Hate Crime Operational Group ("HCOG") which among its objectives is to deliver a hate crime action plan during 2020, increasing awareness and reporting and to increase public confidence in reporting hate crimes. The Ealing Safer Community Team, the Metropolitan Police, the British Transport Police and the Eastern European Hate Crime Project are among HCOG's members.

HCOG has been involved in various initiatives together with the police to develop awareness of hate crime and to publicise the WLEC's support to victims of Hate Crime. During the past two years, the WLEC has assisted hate crime victims in neighbour disputes, and employment as well as victims of criminal offences generally.

Neighbour disputes are handled by the Ealing Safer Community Team, on the basis that they require local solutions in the form of mediation and other interventions from the Council relating to tenancy obligations, mental health referrals and exclusion orders. Our interaction with victims of hate crime involved in neighbour dispute has resulted in our highlighting the prevalence of hate crimes in such complaints. Previously, hate crimes were overlooked by the police in this setting but, recently, we have observed a change in strategy where the West Area BCU are now targeting neighbour dispute in the detection of hate crimes.

The WLEC has also contributed to the prosecution of hate crime in Ealing following a test case, involving neighbours, that we have already reported on in our previous Annual Report. Hate crime laws are complex because they have been developed in a piecemeal fashion over time, resulting in victims not being treated equally by the criminal justice system. In addition, police officers who attend incidents are not trained in recognising the nuances of hate crimes and those responsible for charging do not understand the law sufficiently to ensure perpetrators are punished to the full extent of the law, or at all.

As part of our hate crime work, we have also assisted employees who have been victims of hate incidents as a result of discrimination in the workplace. Hate incidents are simply incidents of hate that are unrelated to a criminal offence. Hate crimes in the workplace are usually closely related to discrimination and are normally in the form of abuse, name calling, harassment, intimidation and bullying which are all potential criminal offences.

Harassment in the workplace is common and usually involves some form of discrimination, but it is also a criminal offence in terms of the CDA or the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Employees are usually advised to seek remedies in terms of the Equality Act 2010, as victims can recover damages in the Employment Tribunal. We encourage employee victims to report harassment and other criminal offences to the police as it affects the perpetrator directly and the employer too, owing to the stigma of criminality. Of course, employee victims can simultaneously pursue discrimination claims in the Employment Tribunal.

Criminalising incidents of discrimination in employment sends a signal to would-be perpetrators that they will not be shielded from criminal responsibility under cover of a workplace incident.

The unions have also become more proactive in highlighting problems of hate crime in the workplace and are beginning to educate their members in this regard. Unfortunately, many employees are not union members, particularly those that who are likely to be victims of hate crimes in their employment and this is a gap we are able to fill.

# Paula Howell



WLEC's Late Director, Ricky, and HCN at MOPAC's Hate Crime Stakeholders Event

# Hate Crime Project

# Edmund

The year 2020 is quite significant as regards the WLEC hate crime project in many ways. In April of the year, we submitted our successful end of year-two project report to our project funders, the National Lottery Community Fund.

The report showed we exceeded the project aim to process 100 enquiries in the reporting period, as actual total number of hate enquiries and cases processed totalled 108, however of these, only 98 were assessed for the reporting period, as these were the ones that fell within the post-intervention three month outcome assessments evaluation period designed for project measurement of specific outcomes.

On other project outputs such as meetings, workshops, and trainings, remarkable public engagements benchmarks were also achieved. Particularly, we have seen increased partnership working and collaborations between us and other agencies; statutory and community. Of great importance is the successful setting up of the multi-agency Ealing Hate Crime Operational Group, which meets regularly on a bimonthly basis or earlier in response to any significant hate crime emerging incident, such as the brutal attack on two women wearing hijabs at North Ealing underground train station. In response to which, we mobilised partner organisations and conducted a public awareness event in the area with the British Transport

Police, the Metropolitan Police, various multi-faith organisations, Victim Support and Tell Mama all participating.

Also earlier in the year, in response to noticeable increase of hate crime incidents reported around Acton; in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police, the Community Police team and the West London Equality Centre volunteer team held an interactive public reassurance and information session at the popular Acton Town Market.

Such efforts have not only enabled us to strengthen multiagency collaboration towards increasing hate crime detection rates but also to increase public confidence in reporting hate crime. Inter-agency cooperation with more stakeholder organisations in the vanguard of hate crime tackling continues to be pursued.

We receive referrals from organisations such as Gallop, Victim Support and KREC for legal caseworks for hate crime victims, as the WLEC hate crime service is one of the few services that goes beyond logging hate incidents and crimes but undertakes actual casework. Our caseworking team includes volunteers whose first engagements with the service were as victims themselves. Through the project's aims of increasing self-confidence, self-esteem and awareness for hate crime victims, they were significantly motivated to become volunteers themselves and are now helping others, deploying their personal experience to help clients in their journey to resilience. It is worth noting, that there is still more work ahead if we must rid the poison of hate crime from our community. Even as the project enters the third year, we are still seeing hate, prejudice and bias motivated incidents increasingly reported. In the face of a virulent corona virus pandemic impacting lives and livelihoods, we have also seen that the virus of identity based discrimination remains active in our community landscapes in many ways.

Public Health England Report on the impact of Covid-19 on black, Asian and minority ethnic people, showed that Black and Asian groups had the highest death rates from coronavirus. It also noted that racism could contribute to increased risks for BAME groups, as it highlighted historic racism and poorer experiences of healthcare, or at work, meant people in BAME groups were less likely to seek care when they needed to or speak up if they had concerns about risk in the workplace.

We also saw in May this year, in London and across several UK city centres, thousands of people congregated in the "Black Lives Matter" protests over several weekends. These protests were sparked by the death of George Floyd following a policeman kneeling on his neck in the course of his arrest even as the victim was recorded crying in distress "I can't breathe".

In the course of events, we saw protests and counter protest, escalations in hate crime and hate incidents, placing discussions on issues of institutional racism, structural inequality and historic discrimination on the media agenda nationwide. Reporting of raciallymotivated hate crimes in particular is stated by the police to have been increased by events such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, with some police commands reporting that the number of race hate crimes reported had risen by 20% in the past eight months, indicating people feel "more empowered" to report hate crime to the police.

Furthermore, we have seen increase in recorded hate incidents and crimes across sectors and monitored strands. There was a 66% rise in hate crimes reported at professional football games across England and Wales in the concluded season, according to Home Office figures. Incidents reported rose to 194 in 2018-19 and of 323 reports in the past two seasons, 230 related to racism. There were 129 reports of discriminatory behaviour in 2017-18.

This October, new figures obtained by the BBC from all 45 police forces in the UK reveal that the number of reported homophobic hate crime cases almost trebled - from 6,655 in 2014-15, the year same sex marriage became legal in England, to 18,465 in 2019-20.

This shows the absolute importance and the continuing need of the service that our WLEC hate crime project provides in assisting victim to navigate the journey to effectively deal with the aftermath of hate crime. We are optimistic that WLEC will successfully secure the necessary funding to see this project carry on and build on the successes of the immediate years. Below are examples of some of the enquiries and cases we have dealt with.

## **Case Studies**

# Mr RT

Mr RT is of black African ethnicity and works as Traffic Civil Enforcement Officer, he contacted us following an incident at work where he was verbally and racially abused by a group of white males as he was about to issue a PCN on a contravening vehicle. He reported that the racial slurs from the group were sustained and unrelenting, that he had to call the police. However, when the police arrived, they opted to speak to the perpetrators first before speaking to him, after which the police threatened him, the victim, with arrest. We supported the victim in making a hate crime report to the police and are supporting him in making a complaint against the conduct of the officers who attended his initial report.

# Miss BA

Miss BA was shopping in one of the largest UK supermarket chains when an Asian member of staff who happened to be restocking shelves as Ms BA reached for an item shouted at her quite aggressively "move, move...you are not socially distancing". Miss BA challenged the male as she was not happy at being spoken into in such manner, that his unnecessary aggression had frightened her and that she was going

to make a complaint Miss BA then went to speak to another member of staff at the self-service checkout area, who confirmed that she heard the shout and called the attention of a store supervisor to the incident. Miss BA remained at the self-service area as the store supervisor went to speak to the male staff. The male staff started shouting again and came around to Miss BA stating "you black bi\*ch" to the hearing of other customers. Miss BA called the police and while waiting for them to attend also called her brother for support. The male staff continued to rage and things escalated when her brother arrived, as the male staff picked a stack of shopping baskets and threw these at both of them. The police arrived shortly after and the staff member was arrested. We are now supporting Miss BA, liaising with the police and the store management in ensuring that the appropriate charges and disciplinary action are brought against the perpetrator.



No to Hate; signing the pledge

# Help Through Crisis [HTC]

The Help Through Crisis Project is funded by the Community Fund and delivered throughout Ealing by ourselves, Ealing Law Centre and Ealing Community and Voluntary Service (ECVS). The aim of the Project is to provide advice and assistance to residents of Ealing, who are currently using the Food Banks in Ealing as a result of various hardships.

Most people end up at the Food Bank as a result of financial difficulties. For example, many of them have

fallen into arrears with their rent as a result of the benefit cap and Universal Credit payment delays; and some are even facing eviction from their homes.

Low-income earners have also had to turn to the Food Bank due to the high rents in Ealing, which often leaves them with only enough of their wages to pay their bills and leaves nothing for living expenses or food.

Others have had to seek support as a result of issues with Welfare Benefits. Some have been unable to claim benefits due to a lack of computer skills, which is now necessary due to most benefit applications requiring an online application.

Vulnerable adults suffering from various physical and mental health conditions have also had to seek help as they are either not receiving essential disability benefits or have had their benefits stopped.

It is a Crisis Navigator's job to meet with these individuals and offer face to face advice and support at the various Food Banks in Ealing.

The Project is currently in its fourth and final year and has made a positive difference to the lives of many people through the hard work of the HTC CNs. This year we were able to provide assistance to around 140 clients experiencing "normal" hardships, such as rent arrears by providing advice and assistance with applying for benefits in order to maximise income, and helping those who were affected by the mandatory COVID-19 "lockdowns" and other Government imposed restrictions of 2020. Please see below for a sample of our cases:

# Ms Ezra Burnett - Crisis Navigator / Caseworker

## 1. Ms V

Client was living in her car with her 9-year-old daughter when we met her. She had previously been evicted by her previous landlord, a housing association, due to rent arrears. She had accumulated arrears as her rent was higher than her salary and she did not know that she could apply for benefits.

Client and her daughter were placed in a bed and breakfast by the Council. However, the conditions at the B&B were appalling, as the property had mice, no central heating and the bathroom and toilet was in disrepair. The client chose to stay in her car with her daughter as they could not bear to be in the B&B any longer.

We immediately made a referral to the Social Services as the Ealing Housing had refused to assist her, having decided that she made herself intentionally homeless by accumulating rent arrears. With our help, the client was eventually moved to Luton with her daughter by Social Services.

As the client was unemployed and had no savings to support herself and her daughter, we helped her to successfully claim Universal Credit.

The client's unexpected move to Luton meant that she was unable to prepare for the move and was forced to

place a majority of her belongings in storage as they could not fit into her new home. Unfortunately, the client could not afford to keep paying the costs of the storage facility or remove her belongings with UC as her only income. We helped her cover these costs by successfully applying for a grant of £430 from the Vickers Relief Fund.

We also successfully applied for a fridge-freezer from BBC Children in Need for the client as her new home did not have one.

# Ms Emily Aghili - Crisis Navigator / Caseworker

## 2. Client P

I first engaged with Client P in January 2020. I learned that Client P was a victim of domestic violence and after divorcing her abusive former spouse, became the sole carer of her two very young children.

Client P was struggling to pay her rent and fell into housing arrears with her private landlord. She is employed on a part-time basis as a nurse and made a claim for UC relatively late due to a mistaken belief that she would not be entitled to claim.

When I first met client P, she was due to attend court in a few days as the landlord was seeking to evict her and repossess the property. I assisted client P in writing to the court to postpone the hearing which was successful. I then advised Client P to contact the Local Authority and report the imminent threat of homelessness. The Local Authority eventually agreed to pay the majority of client P's outstanding rent to the landlord in exchange for the withdrawal of the claim and a renewed tenancy agreement. Client P is no longer facing eviction as the landlord's claim was withdrawn and a renewed tenancy agreement given. I applied to the Vicars Relief fund for a grant to help with the remaining rent arrears. The grant application was successful, and this was then paid directly to the landlord.

# <u>Ms Gamila Duale – Crisis Navigator / EUSS</u> <u>Caseworker</u>

I have been working on the Help through crisis project and the EUSS project since April 2019. Before then I volunteered with WLEC for two years. I joined WLEC as a UWL undergraduate student doing my LLB in the hopes of gaining experience and learning new skills. This year I am now doing my LPC and being at WLEC has helped me enhance my oral and writing skills, which is vital to success in my career.

I initially started in the Ealing Foodbank and later switched to Southall but now attend the foodbank in Hanwell. This gives me the opportunity to provide face to face advice and support to users of the foodbanks. The project has helped provide grant awards for basic household items, discretionary payment for rent arrears that has helped prevent evictions, and supported people who had their benefits stopped or refused.

We take great pride in our work and we intend to carry on supporting vulnerable communities in Ealing and the West London area. During the recent global pandemic, it has become clear that people were out of work, thus having food insecurity and having to rely on benefits. COVID 19 has exposed the many problems in our welfare system.

I also worked on the EUSS project which aims to assist the most vulnerable EU citizens and at-risk communities in regularizing their immigration status in response to Brexit. We engage with individuals and support them in gaining their settled or Pre-settled status. Many of the EU clients were approached as a result of our presence at the Ealing Foodbanks.

This shows the need for vulnerable individuals to regulate their immigration status. We have seen a sharp rise in application between August- October 2019 and we expect to encounter another sharp rise in the end of this year as the transition period ends.

It has been a massive heartbreak for WLEC having lost our beloved Director Ricky Singh in March this year (2020). I am very humbled to have worked under his supervision and remember very much his enthusiasm for our fundamental human rights. His invaluable guidance has helped shaped the ideals that I now aspire to be in becoming a Lawyer.

It has also been a blessing working on both projects and I am extremely thankful for the support of my colleagues namely Barbara, Edmund, Paula and Ezra.

Below is a case study from our work:

### 3. Client WR

Client, a single male, lives in a shared accommodation in Southall. He is currently not working due to significant mental and physical health issues. WR initially approached us in early March during the lockdown and informed us about his health and financial difficulties. Client informed us that he suffers from PTSD as a result of childhood sexual abuse he suffered in a Children's home.

Client had rent arrears of £830 mainly occurring from his difficulties managing finances. He also owes £275 in council tax arrears. We assisted him by applying for Discretionary housing payment (DHP).

Due to his mental illness, WR found it very difficult to provide accurate information as he gets very anxious and gets flashbacks that can affect his memory.

We tasked ourselves with retrieving the documents needed for the DHP application from the council. We then sent the application and provided the documentary evidence needed.

Our client was awarded £830 towards his rent arrears and £178.98 a month covering the shortfall in his rent from May 2020 to May 2021. This amounted to a total £2798.78 award.

# Have Your Say

The WLEC is happy to announce that it is a key partner in a new innovative project funded by the European Commission by way of Erasmus. The project manager, Joseph Karauli with other team members will be working with partner organisations throughout seven EU countries. Summary

Recent events in the UK have demonstrated clearly: many citizens in the EU are potentially misinformed about what the EU is, what it does, and how decisions in the EU are made. Mis-trust into the idea of international cooperation, and recourse to nationalistic doctrines are strong in the currently 28 EU member states, but, in all member states, anti-EU populism has become an increasing problem.

In Have Your Say, we tackle this problem by developing and testing, in seven partner countries innovative forms of educational group activities for low-skilled adults to enable them to reflect their opinions on issues of public interest and to base their decisions on facts rather than myths. Thus, the project is aimed at promoting basic citizenship skills of people with lower educational achievements.

Why create the Have Your Say project now?

With particular trends surrounding the European Union and a general rise in so-called "euro-scepticism" in the last ten years among citizens from a diverse demographic within those countries, the Have Your Say project seeks to address some of the any root causes contributing to that rise and subsequently challenge many forms of misconceptions, inaccurate and or false information.

Although there are several areas, platforms and subjects that arguably enable misinformation, the main focus will be is challenging (and possibly rectifying) those misconceptions, specifically those in relation to the European Union. Therefore, the desired outcome is to encourage learners to utilise reliable information in drawing their own informed conclusions.

The European Union's motto since 2000 has been, 'United in diversity'. As such it is one that promotes the idea of member states coming together and sharing in their goals and over-coming challenges in a unified process and method. This can also reflect the requirement for those member states and the citizens therein to be unified by way of communication and more specifically, language. Therefore, the promotion of 'simple language' is something that has been emphasised within the EU and its importance has been realised. Therefore, the HYS project will when creating materials subscribe to the standards set by the EU in terms of simple language.

Which EU Partners are involved in the Have Your Say project?

The HYS project is being implemented by partners from six member states of the European Union.

VHS Hannover - Municipal Adult Education centre (lead partner)

Nevelők Háza Egyesület, Pécs (Hungary) - NGO-run AECadult education centre

Consorzio OPEN - Bologna and Verona - a network of education centres

Folkuniversitetet Kristianstad Sweden - adult education centre AEC attached to University of Lund

CEPA San Cristóbal - municipal adult education centre - Spain, Tenerife

The West London Equality Centre (WLEC) - United Kingdom, ZEB Stephansstift -Hannover (Germany), adult education centre AEC of a larger protestant

welfare institution, COOP SAPSE - Social Cooperative for Employment and Training - Corsica (France)

Have Your Say' project stages:

The Have Your Say project consists of achieving and delivering three intellectual outputs or stages across the three-year initiative.

Firstly, the starting point of the Have Your Say initiative is to conduct research and explore existing forms of good practice in relation to different education methodologies relating to the subject of the EU (possibly already with a certain focus on learners with low formal education achievements).

Secondly, to produce a publication of resources that contain factual information on the topic of the European Union, particularly its history, its multiple institutions and their purposes, the direct and indirect effects of its Laws on member states and citizens therein. The distinctive nature of this publication is that it will be produced and written with a specific set of target audiences in mind.

Finally, the main component of the project is to develop eight new, innovative learning methodologies for European civic education for the aforementioned target audience. This can be semestrial courses, or weekend courses, or innovative events custom-made for the target audience, to help them develop their own position on the European Union, and base their position on facts rather than hearsay or questionable claims. Project manager's comments

I am both grateful and optimistic about the Have Your Say project in that it will achieve the goals it has set out to achieve. Working with partner organisation throughout the EU to promote inclusion and positive attitudes regarding fact based learning throughout the EU is a vital initiative thus attempting to empower citizens and all the respective countries to shift towards a fact based learning approach and move away from all forms of misinformation and disinformation in respect to learning practices.

It is an absolute pleasure to take a lead on the Have Your Say project. I would like to show my gratitude to the West London Equality Centre, specifically Mr. Ricky Singh and Ms. Barbara Karayi. Although Mr. Singh is no longer with us, he was an important figure both in London and across Europe.

### Joseph Karauli

## **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

#### WEST LONDON EQUALITY CENTRE

#### DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

31.3.20 31.3.19 £ £ INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS Donations and legacies 1,316 Donations 360 Grants 310,756 206,523 311,116 207,839 Investment income Deposit account interest 542 198 Total incoming resources 311,658 208,037 EXPENDITURE Direct charitable activities Staff training 461 180 Project costs 12.129 21.911 162 Volunteer expenses 1,934 Depreciation computer and office equipment 426 -14.950 22.253 Support costs **Overhead costs** Wages 185,172 133,061 Social security 15,662 9,551 Pensions 2,779 2,015 Operating leases - premises 6,000 5,999 1,465 3,734 Insurance Telephone 1,830 1,043 Postage and stationery 3,934 826 278 Computer costs -Sundry expenses 385 Document storage 705 600 Printing costs 855 1,818 Professional fees 4,269 1,563 Bank charges 156 156 223,490 160,366 Governance costs Wages 2,300 2,150 Social security 258 182 Auditors' remuneration 3,000 3,000 5,558 5,332 Total resources expended 243,998 187,951 Net income 67,660 20,086

#### WEST LONDON EQUALITY CENTRE

#### BALANCE SHEET 31 MARCH 2020

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	31.3.20 Total funds £	31.3.19 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS Tangible assets	9	1	866	867	2
CURRENT ASSETS Debtors Cash at bank and in hand	10	2,699 57,524 60,223	12,308 50,992 63,300	15,007 108,516 123,523	134 50,148 50,282
CREDITORS Amounts falling due within one year	11	4,179	(14,638)	(10,459)	(4,013)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		64,402	48,662	113,064	46,269
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		64,403	49,528	113,931	46,271
NET ASSETS		64,403	49,528	113,931	46,271
FUNDS Unrestricted funds Restricted funds	12			64,403 49,528	46,270 1
TOTAL FUNDS				113,931	46,271

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

Mr I M Potts - Trustee

Mr B Andonian - Trustee

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Paul Bradford; Ian Potts; Elizabeth Salmon; Josephine De Souza; Patricia Walker; Sue Flemons; Johanna Cargill; Jyoti Kumar; Sandy Derbyshire; Raheema Yousuf Mohamoud; Abdi Ali; Ranjini Yogananthan; Luca Petrone Gomez; Mohammed Mateen Alam; Hawah Catherine Judith Kargbo; Olufemi Ademola Adeeko; Princy Thavarajah; Fatima Nurkic; Afia Konadu Morrison; Radek Kaleta; Gabija Grigaliunaite; Soumaya Eddridi; Aya Mohamed; Barbara Karayi;

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#### Acknowledgements

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### West London Equality Centre WLEC

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