

WEST LONDON EQUALITY CENTRE

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”



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Chair's Report

Ian M Potts

Welcome to our 2019 Report which covers our activities over the last year.

I apologise for the deferment of this AGM which is due to the fact that the senior partner in our auditors died and in the subsequent reorganization of the partnership our audit manager was moved and it took time for the new manager to get to know our finances so that, although we managed to file our accounts on time, they were not ready when we should have had our AGM.

In this my second year as chair we have seen a great expansion in our activities and I must give thanks to all our members of staff and our volunteers for the excellent work they have put in to enable us to do so. Especial thanks must go to Ricky for getting us the extra work and managing the team. I must also thank Barbara, who took over as treasurer from Marie when she emigrated to France (following Brexit), and has efficiently managed all our legal paperwork.

Barbara is a volunteer who has qualified via us as a solicitor and is a good example of the training that we can provide. We also provide much training and experience to UWL students, who find this helpful both in obtaining their qualifications and afterwards finding a job. When I see UWL's signs saying how large a percentage of their students go on to work, I always think that we had a hand in this result.

As always I welcome our liaison with the University which now goes back to before the formation of the University (in 1992, when I was a lecturer there!) and we congratulate the Vice-Chancellor on his New Year's honour.

Ian Potts, Chair.

Director's Report

Ricky Singh

Our organisation has successfully assisted and supported those experiencing deprivation and other issues commonly experienced by disadvantaged persons.

This has been achieved by our staff, volunteers, Professor John CBE and his staff at UWL and via financial support of our funders: The Lottery Community Fund, 1E: Sumir Karayi; Henry Smith, Mrs Smith and Mount Trust; ECVS and the EU Erasmus+ Fund.

Our staff and volunteers are exceptional, in that they deliver services of the highest quality and work cohesively as a unified force for the better of our community. We were able to deliver substantial services due to the skilled approaches adopted by our talented staff members and our wonderful volunteers.

* The WLEC has for the past 57 years been at the centre of helping the London Borough of Ealing's Disadvantaged Communities – one of the reasons why the organisation was set up by volunteers in the first instance.

* A long history of service delivery to disadvantaged residents of all ethnicities, advising over 3000 persons in the last year.

* WLEC regards the maintenance of quality and appropriate frameworks as of the highest importance. We have been accredited in 17 advice categories with the AQS Quality Mark plus the Disability Confident Quality Mark.

* All WLEC's staff members were former WLEC volunteers – highly skilled and qualified to deliver these services, having delivered several similar projects over the past 10 years. For example, some projects we delivered are: BMER Specialist Advice and Support, Hate Crime Support, Advice and Advocacy services, Anti-Poverty and we are currently delivering: Crisis Support, Work and Volunteering programmes, EU Refugee Project, and Home Office Support projects.

Our work and volunteering programmes

Persons of all ages need to be better prepared for the world of work, instilling in them a 'growth mind-set' – one based on the assumption that through learning and effort one improves, that "I can do better if I apply myself". (Carol S Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006) New York: Random House).

Structured hands-on work experience under supervision from day one coupled with individual training and work placements help them to break the cycle of 'no experience, no job – no job, no experience'.

Our work and volunteering programmes are about so much more than work experience.

We also provide long-term support to unemployed persons, focusing on building soft skills like teamwork, confidence, motivation and communication.

We get young people involved in their communities and working in a team; we offer one-to-one mentoring; a buddying scheme, and we help them get the qualifications they need to find work. We find that it is a combination of all these things that helps to get those seeking employment ready for, and into work.



Training students and volunteers

VOLUNTEERING AND TRAINING

In the past year at WLEC, formerly EEC, we have been able to help many individuals to obtain gainful employment and entry into further education.

We are also helping law students to qualify as solicitors via a period of recognised training. An example is given below of how our work training programme has assisted persons to become qualified solicitors using the SRA Training Regulations 2014 – under regulation 2.2 for an assessment of professional qualifications and experience against the requirements for recognised training as shown below.

Excerpts from SRA Assessment Report:

“The best evidence of how the Applicant meets these outcomes is the appraisal documentation supplied, supported by the references. In addition to quarterly appraisals (called Quarterly Reviews by the Council [EEC]), the Applicant has also undertaken many training courses after having identified her own training needs as part of the appraisal process. The frank disclosure of her needs and areas of development within the appraisal documentation reflects a mature and professional approach to self-development. It also demonstrates that the Applicant is very self-aware and conscientious in relation to the need to address development needs and to continuously improve.

She has worked in an environment, which is supportive of this, and she has therefore been able to take advantage of considerable on-going training.

The Applicant has been predominantly working for the Ealing Equality Council (‘the Council’) as a volunteer paralegal.

Significant documentation is produced of the work undertaken by the Applicant within the Ealing Equality Council and the Community Advice Programme. The Council is a charitable organisation. It is clear from that that the Council undertakes a valuable service to the community, particularly in the sphere of advancing equality and human rights. The objectives of the Council appear to be invaluable and commendable in terms of offering a unique pro bono service to disadvantaged members of the public who may otherwise lack the ability to access justice. The Applicant is identified within the annual report as being a volunteer worker with the Council. The Applicant has taken the care to set out for each area of law in which she claims experience, how she has met the outcomes and she also set out a pack of evidence for each of those aspects of law to demonstrate how these have been met in reality.

It makes for impressive reading.

The work which the Applicant has undertaken is, in my view, equivalent to that which would be undertaken by a person completing a Period of Recognised Training ('PRT') and, in some instances would even be considered to be relatively complex work for a qualified solicitor.

The documentation supports the Applicant's view that she has sufficient experience in the spheres of law outlined above and that she has also undertaken contentious and non-contentious work.

It is also apparent that she has worked with clients who are very challenging, particularly in the sphere of mental health issues. Additionally, the organisational objectives are such that the Applicant will have experienced a broader context for her work than might have been the case had she worked within a more traditional legal firm environment. Samples of work supplied include, inter alia, letters, emails, formal legal documents, court documentation and notes of meetings and

telephone conversations. It is probably one of the most comprehensive packs of evidence of work undertaken that I have seen when dealing with applications of this nature. As the Applicant has managed her own legal caseload, she has engaged in all the relevant legal skills that a person undergoing a PRT would have experienced.

The Applicant has set out well, with the use of good examples and samples of her work as evidence, how she meets the outcomes. The Applicant is articulate and drafts both correspondence to clients and other third parties very well. She has a flowing style, which is easy to follow. Equally, her drafting skills in relation to court documentation and this application are very good. In terms of the correspondence with clients, it is clear that the Applicant has had to deal with a wide variety of clients with differing levels of need and from a range of cultures. She has also had significant experience of communicating with clients who have major mental health issues. Adapting her style of communication appropriately has been one of her priorities and it is apparent from the appraisal documentation that she has felt that this is an important focus of development for her.

Handling her own caseload within this particular organisation, the Applicant has had considerable experience of interviewing and advising clients from disadvantaged backgrounds in particular. This will have provided her with an excellent training ground in understanding how important it is to adjust communication to enable those with, for example, English as a second language or working through an interpreter, on the one hand and corresponding with external organisations and bodies, such as courts, tribunals and other authorities on the other. From my perusal of the evidence, it is clear that the Applicant is totally conversant with this need and is successful in applying it.

The Applicant sets out well within her application, with the use of excellent examples, how she meets the outcomes. It is apparent from the

copies of evidence supplied by the Applicant, as well as the references, that the Applicant is professional and capable, managing her own caseload. Had she not been able to meet these outcomes, I do not consider that the references would have been so complimentary, nor would she have been entrusted with significant responsibility in both the chambers of Miss X or at the Council. On the contrary, she is complimented by referees, who consider her to be suitable for qualification as a solicitor."

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



Hate Crime training with student volunteers and paralegal trainees



Staff and Volunteers



Seminar Training

Iquo

I am volunteering at WLEC at the moment, whilst I also help to take care of an aged mother.

As a Human Rights organisation, I wanted to know and to understand what that actually meant. I also wanted to see how a human rights organisation operates, up close.

I learned how to interact with the clients who come in to seek the organisation's help, in whatever area of law that they need help with.

From the moment the phone starts ringing, when the information is gathered, when the appointment is made in the book, when the client turns up for the appointment, to seeing the satisfaction on the client's face that the problem sought has been dealt with satisfactorily.

Let me just say that the Legal Advisors are the best and they take the mentoring of us volunteers seriously.

At the moment, I am being mentored by Adrienne Khan, one the Advisors. She gave me a case to deal with, which meant that I had to make an application to one of the organisations that awards grants to families in need. She walked through the whole process and it had a successful outcome.

I am shy by nature but the organisation is helping me to overcome that and to teach me the best practice which must always be adopted within a legal environment.

Matt Cresser says that: I joined WLEC because of my interest in equality and human rights. And also I wanted to learn how to use my education to assist people in need and the disabled, given that I have a disability which I was determined would not stop me from doing anything I wanted

I have worked on many cases, I particularly enjoy housing law. Unfortunately, it is an area of law in high demand due to the housing crisis.

Since volunteering with WLEC, I have grown in confidence. I have completed my Legal Practice Course. My hope is to eventually qualify as a Solicitor and to that end I am training with WLEC under the supervision of a Judge, Solicitor and a Barrister.

I also appreciate the help of Paula who trains me in Employment Cases when helping the disadvantaged clients whom we serve.

Matt

Barbara Karayi

Treasurer.

Since starting as Treasurer a year and a half ago we have more than doubled our staff and have gained more funding for projects which cover staff costs. We continue to make funding applications so as to enable the continuation of the work we do for the most needy in our area of benefit.

All staff were once volunteers. This is obviously preferable to having only unsalaried volunteers do the work of the charity, so our income for project goes mostly on salaries and pensions. We are proud to be paying the London Living Wage and are also dealing with a few reasonable adjustments via the DWP who reimburse some of those costs.

Yet still we are able to offer advice to such a wide range of clients. We are very efficient! We are looking for a book keeper volunteer.

As legal caseworker/solicitor

I mentor a range of our volunteers and try to encourage and motivate them. They can be surprised that we don't entertain all the clients' demands when client's expectation are unreasonable.

Usually we entertain a client patiently and give gentle guidance, having learnt that when someone comes to us, they often have been led from here to there on a search for a solution to their issue. We tend to offer realistic answers for which clients are often grateful. We help people understand their options and our feedback is almost always excellent. People are grateful someone is listening.

I've spent a considerable amount of time on a case where a lady had let her house out via an agency who let her house to the council. The agency wasn't passing the rent on and the council was evicting the tenant. It all got very complicated when the agency went into liquidation. The tenant moved out eventually and the lady got her house back, but is left out of pocket because of the rent arrears and a bailiff who couldn't remove the agency's goods due to insolvency.

Other stories are much happier and on the whole we connect people with what is rightfully theirs with regards to benefits. I regularly prepare my clients for tribunal hearings which they attend with the right arguments and the right evidence. We refer to the free representation unit if time permits but most clients of mine go it alone, and usually succeed. Tribunals are happy to hear from the client direct.

I also deal with a range of housing issues, usually disrepair and councils refusing to accept a property as unsuitable e.g. children in B and Bs for months or even years. It can be quite depressing, so we try to ensure the volunteers and staff are not overrun and feel empowered. We teach them to be professional, so they maintain a degree of boundary when helping clients.

Mojdeh Aghili.

I first started volunteering with WLEC in August 2016. At the time, I had just acquired my Bachelor of Laws and wanted to gain some practical experience. Within a short space of time, I was given invaluable daily mentoring alongside regular shadowing of staff and plenary training sessions held every Wednesday. From the outset, WLEC's ethos of helping those most vulnerable in society was easily distinguishable and always honoured by the organisation. When an opportunity for paid work arose elsewhere, I took this up but gave it up so as to

re-join WLEC. This was because I felt both the work carried out by WLEC as well as the good nature/character of the staff and otherwise, could not easily be replicated. I then went on to complete my LPC whilst remaining a volunteer. My intention during my LPC studies is to, upon completion, qualify with WLEC via the 'equivalent means route'. I aim to become a solicitor and wish to use my position and knowledge to assist those in need. I feel that WLEC's environment is best suited to helping me with this objective and has already allowed me to do so.

I am now in the process of qualifying and have recently started my role as a Crisis Navigator with the organisation. The focus of this role is to achieve the aims of the Help Through Crisis (HTC) programme; a project set up to identify and help those at risk of or already facing hardship, relying on Foodbanks, etc. Achieving these aims has been made much easier through the support of WLEC staff who themselves, each offer varying expertise. This combined effort has proved to make a vast difference in the quality and speed of help delivered to HTC clients.

Gamila Duale

HELP THROUGH CRISIS

I was previously a volunteer for West London Equality Centre, and I am currently final year law student at UWL. Since April I have been a staff member working on the Help through Crisis (HTC). A project which aims to assist people in hardship and enable them to access advice and advocacy in relation to benefits and housing.

During this time, we have had several clients that we have successfully overcome their hardships.

Cases

HS is a single mother with 4 children. She suffers from Migraines and depression. After her separation from her husband she was left with several debts and unpaid bills. We applied for a grant towards her electricity (£80) and an award from Thames water grant to pay most of her water bills. She also needed help acquiring beds for her and her children. We were able to successfully apply to a grant provider called Family Fund that generously provided £810 to buy four beds.

LM is a young man who approached us when he was homeless and struggling to find accommodation. He was in debt from rent arrears and student overdraft fees. We referred him to PayPlan, they were able to give him specialist debt advice. He was also seeking advice on finding employment. With the help of the HTC employment advisor we reviewed his CV and assisted him in finding apprenticeships and jobs. In a month LM was able to find an apprenticeship that helped him get back on his feet. He still receiving continued advice and support through our drop-in-sessions.

EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME

The European union Settlement scheme opened in March 2019. It registers EU citizens and their families that live in the UK, so they continue living in the UK after Brexit. We started opening weekly drop-in-session for the community in both Ealing and Hounslow on June 2019. It has been very exciting working on this program with two other colleagues. I have learnt a tremendous amount of skills that has contributed in the dedication to my work.

We are to carry on with this project and aim to finish in March 2020.

Julita

I am a currently second year Criminology with Law student at University of West London and have been volunteering with West London Equality Centre for last 2 years.

When I first joined the organisation, I knew this was the right place to be. In fact, I was very stressed as I never did any legal job before and it took me a while to get confident. I always wanted to actively help people, especially those most vulnerable. In my opinion, the service delivered by the West London Equality Centre is very beneficial for our community, by providing the service among those most in need, but who cannot afford high cost of private legal representation. I found volunteering at the organisation very valuable and rewarding experience, particularly when I can see the difference which our work can make for the others.

During my time here, I had occasion to assist cases involving employment, housing, benefits and debts. In addition, I have worked together with the staff members in cases against discrimination – Hate Crime Project as well as Help Through Crisis including number of homelessness cases and assistance at the food banks. Moreover, all this gave me an opportunity to develop my interpersonal skills and gain much more confidence which in the future will be very helpful to apply in any job role.

I am very glad that I could be part of this organisation and had a chance to work in such a warm and caring environment. Personally, I think that there should be much more places like this. Additionally, I am looking forward to start paid work on the new project involving registration of the vulnerable EU citizens with the Home Office after the Brexit – EU Settlement Scheme.

Maggie

The opportunity arose to volunteer when I met Ricky at a Law Dinner held at West London University, my alma mater, offered me the possibility to do some legal voluntary work and because I was free I jumped at the offer.

It is very fulfilling to help people who are in need and cannot afford paid legal advice. The atmosphere in the office is very pleasing and I have observed everyone works as a team.

In my short span of time I have worked on several cases which covered housing, employment, immigration and EU law.

In these cases I was able to translate for the advisers and clients in order for the full facts of the issues to become clearly established, which in turn enabled us to give the client the correct advice. The first was a Mr. S who is Emily's client – his English language is not very good, I had to translate from Punjabi and spoke on the phone a couple of times.

The issue was between Mr. S, his rental agent and landlord. There was multiple occupancy in the house and Mr. S had to pay all the bills. On another occasion I had a meeting with Mr. and Mrs. S, took notes, and photocopied his papers. His file contains all the materials and my handwritten notes.

The second one was with Barbara's client, one Ms A. This was regarding housing issues and the possibility of eviction. I read the case file, took notes, which Barbara checked and gave me feedback on. I rang the client with instructions to appear before the Court, along with her sister, who is the owner of the property. I was happy to work alongside a qualified solicitor, who was so helpful.

My next case was immigration law for Bernard. I was translating from Punjabi to English and went to his Holborn office. This was a really tremendous experience: shadowing a judge.

All of these experiences have meant that I have got my confidence back after being out of office work for a while. I enjoy legal work, especially when it comes to new reading, subjects that I have not studied at the university, such as Housing, Racial Discrimination and Human Rights. I still need to learn the skills of computer; legal writing; and drafting letters.

Currently I do not have a paying job so I am very happy to be doing this voluntary legal work. In my free time I am studying for another legal exam in a

foreign jurisdiction (the New York bar) – this includes 3 different exams to qualify as an attorney.

Obi

My name is Achelus Chibuzo OBI. I chose to come to West London Equality Centre (WLEC) as a volunteer so as to avail myself practical experience. At WLEC I am now a paralegal training to become a solicitor via the ‘equivalent means route’.

The last seven months gave me the opportunity to meet and 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, and Social Welfare 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, Trainees, Barristers, a Judge and caseworker–professionals of different specialisations. Together with other volunteers, I conduct interviews, record the client’s enquiries, sought Supervisor’s instructions and offer legal advice.

Undoubtedly, the exposure to clients and dispensing 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 to answer calls. But after the early days, just like 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 been able to advise clients in conjunction with a supervisor who oversees my activities. One client: Ms E. approached us because her home was in a total state of dilapidation.

This case is progressing towards escalation and a referral to the Ombudsman. The client is happy with our tenacity and consistency in dealing with their matter with the landlords.

What I have learnt in this case is that I need to follow up cases 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 a person with limited experience.

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.

Alejandra

I started as a volunteer in February 2018. My goals were to progress personally. I wanted to learn and improve my English and progress professionally and to help people in need, at the same time.

As a former client, I was excited with the idea of being a part of the extraordinary group of people who are committed and advocated to make the people's right to be listened, to give confidence and power to disadvantaged people.

In June 2018 I became part time Office Administrator of the organization and I was committed to a challenge and important job, preparing the office for an audit regarding to our AQS (Advice Quality Standard) Certificate. As a result, I have been constantly improving my knowledge in Law with the support of my colleges.

Working for WLEC I had the opportunity to gain experience, knowledge, and the most important thing, to know wonderful people.

As an EU Family Member, and going through the process myself, I hope I would help as much people as I can to avoid a possible new Windrush Scandal for Europeans living in UK.

I am proud and happy to be part of WLEC and I hope I would continue working for this amazing organization in the future.



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ERASMUS+ KA2

MILAR

Modelli di Inclusione e Lavoro per Rifugiati

PARTNERS

- OPEN ITALIA
- REGIONE EMILIA ROMAGNA
- VHS HANNOVER
- EALING EQUALITY COUNCIL
- FOLKUNIVERSITETET LUND/STOCCOLMA

SUMMARY

The growing number of people seeking refuge in Europe makes it increasingly difficult to match the labour supply of this target with the actual demand for professionals by European enterprises.

In the absence of more targeted measures, after the first phases of reception, the

new refugees risk being marginalized by the social and production community, falling victims to criminal activities.

The MILAR project fosters the learning and testing of a new route towards the employability of refugees, adopting the model of Social Community Enterprise (SCE), at transnational level and in local communities in Italy, Sweden, Germany, and England.

SCEs, innovative but still relatively unexplored experiences, consist of a set of economic and social activities which are defined as ‘hybrid’, i.e. not supported by a single stakeholder/body but rather by multi-stakeholder networks (public and private, profit and non-profit stakeholders), sharing the same collective need, such as for example providing jobs for unemployed people. This results in multisector (agriculture, tourism, environment, etc.) micro-projects which are mutually functional, and of both volunteer and commercial/productive nature.

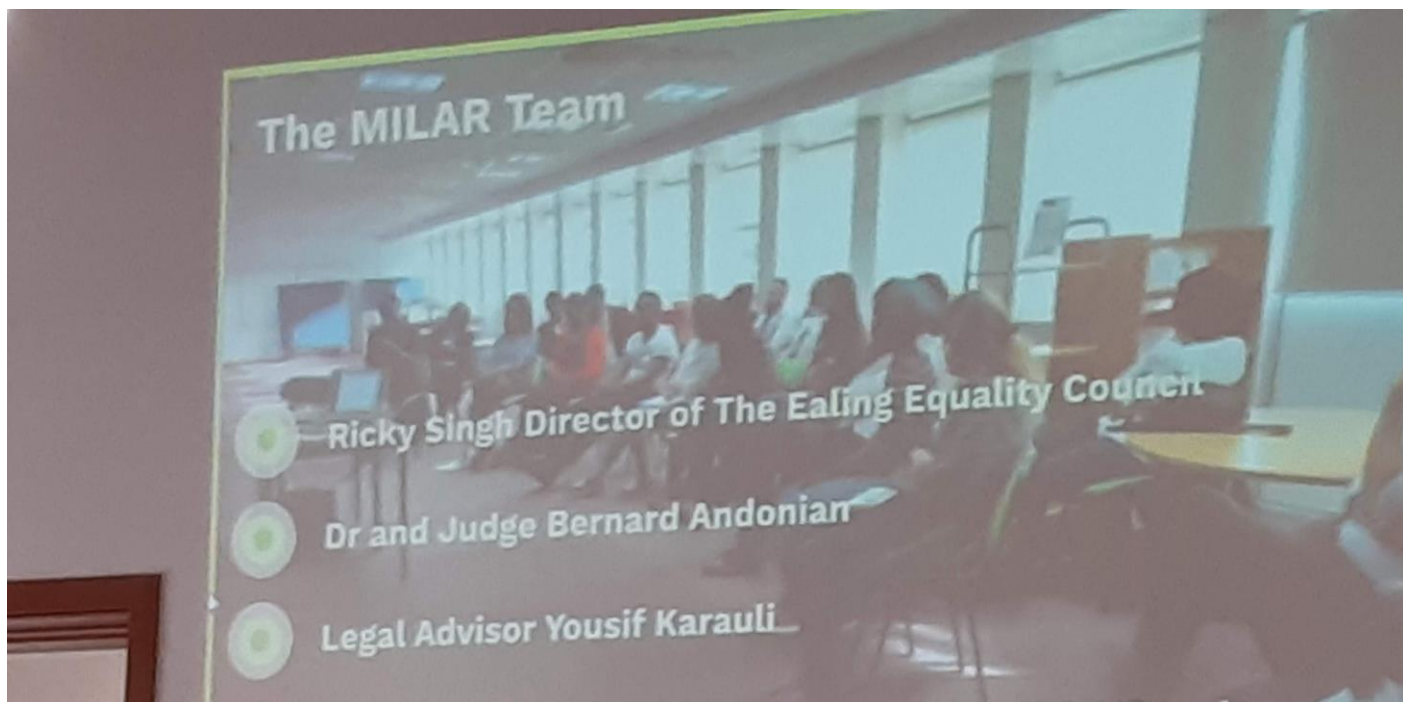
The partnership aims to experiment ‘bottom-up’ projects integrating social and production-oriented enterprises, with a view to promoting the labour integration of a heterogeneous target, such as the refugee population in Europe.

J. Karauli.

The MILAR project has provided a unique opportunity with the aim to integrate Refugees and Asylum seekers into society economically by way of employment, socially and through education. Working closely with multiple organisations, both from a national and international platform including Germany, Sweden and Italy; the project is based on carrying out research, developing a social community enterprise and most importantly the implantation of the successful pattern testing achieved.

The West London Equality Centre has carried out and conducted these works in the United Kingdom. The project aims to evaluate and apply a ‘bottom-up’ approach specifically by empowering individuals, providing refugees and

asylum seekers with the skills, knowledge and tools to enable their individual development thus creating community cohesion.



MIL AR Conference in Bologna Italy





MILAR partners Conference January 2019

WLEC HATE CRIME PROJECT REPORT

Edmund Akeju.

HATE CRIME PROJECT

We are now firmly into year two of a three-year project that is supporting victims of hate crime and encouraging the reporting of discrimination and bias motivated incidents in Ealing, adjoining boroughs and West London. In delivering this project funded by the National lottery, the West London Equality Centre provides advocacy and case specific support to clients who have been victims or witnesses to hate crime or hate incidents in line with the four main outcomes of the project.

These being (1) **Reduced** sense of isolation and alienation for people who have experienced hate crime and improve independence; (2) **Improved** quality of information and advice provision for victims of hate crime and their families across Ealing through publications, information parks and website ;(3) **Improved** referral arrangement and collaboration among voluntary, community, statutory service providers and the criminal justice system; (4)

Empower people impacted by hate crime to have **increased** confidence and self-esteem in reporting hate crime.

Against the background of increasing number of hate crimes reported over the years; for the year 2018–2019 a total of 103,379 cases were reported from figures presented in the Crime Survey for England & Wales for 2019, this shows that hate crime has more than doubled since 2013 when records began. Our strategy in achieving the project aim is to therefore build a culture of ownership for victim care by linking agencies and community service providers to ensure victims experience high quality and coordinated support through our consistent delivery of series of training workshops and seminars out in local communities with specific workshops covering topics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability.

More importantly, we designed the service to not only contribute and increase the collective response to tackling hate crime but also to provide person specific help to the victims to deal with the hate crime and the aftermath, the mental and emotional anxieties, the possible feelings of isolation and perhaps frustrations, but also to assist them in interacting with the criminal justice system to ultimately bring perpetrators to justice, towards forestalling and discouraging repeat occurrence of incidents.

Output

By the end of the project, our target is to have helped **220** clients to report that they have better coping strategies and are more proactive in seeking support in resolving hate crime.

Towards achieving these, we developed a strategic mapping of hate crime stakeholders and selected 58 key organisations. These fall within three identified categories for inward, two-way and outward referrals. Over the period, we are constantly improving the map to meet the needs of the project, increasing the impact, achieving principal outcomes and key performance indicators.

We set up a dedicated freephone number for the project– **0800 294 3479**, for victims and witnesses of hate crime to report through enquiries. This contact number was disseminated over infographic handbills, leaflets, publicity banners at our community interactive sessions and over our social media handles over the period. Thus, the line now averages about **20** enquiries per week monitored by the hate crime navigators and the team of volunteers working on the project.

Outcomes

Now into the second year of the project, we have processed over **190** hate related enquiries. Depending on the fact and complexity, they require various degrees of case work involvement. Thus far, we have achieved **85** clients reporting having better coping strategies, **80** clients have reported feeling less isolated by developing sustainable network. Our evaluations through questionnaires, staff and volunteer feedback, and victims' verbatim accounts indicate that 99% felt less isolated and 95% have made new friendships. A further **62** clients reported better support network which increased their self-esteem, enabling them to deal with the transition to independence, **38** clients reported reduce stress and anxiety levels, **76** clients reported increased well-being because of accessing the project, **98** clients reported they are more confident in reporting hate crime in the future and thus far we have supported **47** clients in developing personal safety plans. Furthermore, we have delivered and facilitated several workshops and fora towards developing new collaborations and refining existing multi-agency hate crime reporting and referral pathways with over **25** organisations have reported a better understanding of the needs/ barriers of HC victims.

Case Studies

Miss DB is of EU nationality and works as a customer service advisor cum shop floor assistant with a local retail shop. On one her usual working days, while on

the shop floor during the course of her duty, she had noticed a customer behaving suspiciously around the display items on the shelves. As she approached this person, they have shouted abuse at her in expletive language, telling her to go back to her country and threatened her with physical violence. On becoming aware of this incident through our victim referral service, we assisted the victim in reporting this matter to the police, assisted her to liaise with them to provide a detailed description of the suspect and ensured that CCTV records were preserved until the police attended to obtain them. With our intervention, the victim reported she is more resilient, able to confidently report any future hate crime occurrence and also support other victims experiencing hate crime should she come across such.

Miss CA *is of Black African ethnicity and an immigrant; she and her family have lived for several years peacefully in the ground floor of a maisonette property within the borough. She reported that since a new neighbour moved into the apartment upstairs, however, they have experienced problems that the Housing Association classed as ‘interparty anti-social behaviour’. By the time, the client came to us, matters had degenerated to the point that she has been issued with a notice seeking possession of the property by the relevant housing association. Through our intervention, we highlighted to her housing association that she was, as a matter of fact, an ongoing victim of hate crime and not anti-social behaviour. We successfully got the notice seeking possession withdrawn, therefore. The Association has now fixed audio/visual cameras around the building to capture evidence and to deter repeat offending.*

Mr JE *is a mixed-race man who works as a night door staff in a venue providing services in the hospitality industry. On a particular night at work he had reasons to refuse a group of overtly intoxicated revellers entry into the venue.*

These persons went on to subject him to racial abuse and made monkey gestures at him. He reported that he found the incident deeply affected his sense of self. As part of our intervention, we seek to refer this client for help with any anxiety related issue that he may experience in the aftermath.

Activities

While the cases above highlight the nuances of hate crime and hate incident faced by persons in our community and the work we do to make a difference in the lives of the victims, we also carry out activities to sensitise members of the entire community on hate crime issues.

Paula Howell

HATE CRIME PROJECT UPDATE

In our last report we provided details of a client who was a victim of hate crime in his employment. He had severe learning difficulties and could not hardly read or write. The Respondents are discussing settlement but, so far, they have not made an offer that is acceptable to the Claimant. It is likely that the matter will be settled before it is heard in the tribunal, however, we are still preparing for a final hearing.

Hate Crime Case Studies

The client and her family have been experiencing race and religious harassment by their neighbour opposite for over five years. They are Hindu and their neighbour is a Sikh family. They have been neighbours for over 30 years and there have been no disputes between the families, however, the Sikh family suddenly and without any reason started a campaign of harassment which involved threats of violence and criminal damage. We assisted the client to approach her local MP and attended the meeting between the parties after

which we prepared a letter to the MP detailing how hate crimes are defined and how they should be dealt with by the police. The MP promised to arrange a meeting between our client and the Borough Commander which never materialized, and the client was subsequently informed by the MP's office that they would not take any further action.

We have provided the client with detailed information about hate crimes and how they should be handled by the police. We have also contacted the police directly, but they have not been helpful.

The matter is still ongoing, and we continue to try to liaise with the police directly.

It is clear that the police do not have a uniform approach to hate crimes and the emergency response teams who are supposed to identify hate crimes have little understanding of the law, or the procedures laid down in the guidelines issued by the College of Policing.

Evidence is not brought before the Crime Prosecution Service with the result that perpetrators of hate crime offences are charged with the basic offence and the aggravated hate element is not dealt with in court. This means that the perpetrator is given a much short sentence, (the longest in this case was eight weeks) whereas, had the aggravated element had been included the maximum sentence is 2 years. The result is that the perpetrator has committed repeated offences without fear of serious consequences.

The victim and her family have become distressed and fearful owing to the sustained harassment by their neighbours which most victims of hate crime experience. Studies have confirmed that victims often suffer severe psychological harm compared to victims of other crimes. The reason for this is that perpetrators target victims because of who they are making it impossible for victims to avoid exposure.

The Safer Ealing Partnership Board (SEPB), of which we are a member, have been made aware of the problems we have encountered in the processing of hate crimes by the police in Ealing. The WLEC intends to advocate for the development of a hate crime plan by the SEPB that includes better training for police officers and a programme of education within the borough so that vulnerable communities are made aware that hate crime is an offence and that they can expect the police to act where incidents are reported.

The SEPB is a statutory body set up in terms of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that requires each local authority to work together with the local police, fire brigade, health authority, probation service, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and civil society to develop a crime strategy for their area. Many local authorities with similar demographics to Ealing have a Hate Crime Plan in place alongside the main Crime Plan, however, in Ealing hate crime is not regarded as a major concern largely because residents have never been supported in bringing incidents to the police.

Employment Case Study – hate incident

The client alleged that she was a victim of discrimination in her employment. She had been employed by the Respondent, an agency supplying domestic staff, as a housekeeper.

She further alleged that she should have received payment over the Christmas period even though she was not required to continue with her assignment. She was booked to work as one of a group of housekeepers at a residence and, as a result, turned down other work that was subsequently offered to her.

She worked only a few days when she was advised that the house owner no longer required her service but, on her last day of employment, she went to work only to discover that she had been replaced by a white British woman. Our client is Chinese, and she believes that the full-time staff, who were mostly of Eastern European descent, disliked her because of her ethnicity. She reported

being told that her food was smelly, being given jobs that the other white employees and agency staff disliked and that she was generally ostracised.

She demanded payment for the entire period because she was left without any income over the Christmas period.

We wrote to the employer alleging discrimination and advising them that their client would be a party to the proceedings because the discrimination was carried out by one of his employees.

A dispute was referred to ACAS.

The claimant shortly received an offer in the amount of £2,000.00 in full and final settlement of the dispute and an agreement was drawn up through ACAS.

We have received a number of complaints in employment relating to hate incidents in the form of discriminatory conduct. Claimants are assisted to raise an employment tribunal claim before they are referred to other organizations for representation.

Adrienne Khan – Crisis Navigator / Caseworker

This has been my second year working for the West London Equality Centre (WLEC) as a Crisis Navigator on the Help Through Crisis Project.

The Help Through Crisis Project is funded by the Community Fund and delivered throughout Ealing by ourselves, Ealing Mind, 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 third 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 through grant applications to third party organisations to assist our clients with the purchase of school uniforms for children from low-income families, and basic furniture for families who could not even afford essentials, such as beds.

We have been a pillar of support for homeless individuals and families facing eviction. We helped homeless individuals find shelters for the night and helped people remain in their homes by applying for Discretionary Housing Payments on their behalf.

Please see below for a sample of our cases:

Mr C

When we met Mr C at the Hanwell Food Bank, he urgently needed help as he was going through a financial crisis. He had previously been homeless and was unfortunately rehoused by Capital Housing, who charged him £1053.78 per month for a small studio flat.

At the time Mr C's only income was Universal Credit, which was subject to the benefit cap. As a result of this, his monthly Universal Credit (UC) payments were not enough for him to pay the shortfall in his rent, bills and cover his necessities, such as food.

He was also suffering from severe depression and an on-going medical condition affecting his neck and back, which meant that he was unable to work.

We were able to help Mr C by assisting him with successful claims for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) and Personal Independent Payments (PIP). Thanks to our hard work he was able to pay off his arrears and receive an additional income, which also led to the benefit cap on his UC being removed.

Ms T

Ms T also sought our help at the Hanwell Food Bank as she was in extreme financial hardship.

She was a 60-year-old 3rd Year Fashion and Textiles student. As a result of this, she was not entitled to claim benefits. She was also unable to work as she suffers from severe health issues. Her only income was, therefore, Student Finance, which was not enough to cover her living costs as well as her course fees.

She needed our urgent assistance as she owed Ealing Council rent arrears of £1,294.13 and was about to be evicted from her home of twenty years. We were able to sign post her to the appropriate organisations in order to ensure her eviction did not take place. As a result, she was able to obtain permission from Ealing Council to rent out her spare bedroom in order to increase her income. She also received assistance from Advice4Renters, an organisation that we have close ties to, which prepared her for her court hearings.

Due to our advice and support, Ms T's eviction was put on hold and she was able to arrange a favourable payment plan to pay off her arrears.

We also helped increase the quality of her life by obtaining a grant from Fund from Human Need to purchase essential items that she needed in order to manage her medical issues.

Ms N

For Ms N our service was something she desperately needed as she was a homeless rough sleeper with no form of income. She was also suffering from depression and was being treated by Ealing Rise for drug dependency.

She had previously attempted to claim Universal Credit but was unable to progress her application as she needed to provide the Department for Work and Pension with a copy of her P45 from her previous employers, a mail sorting company she had been employed by for a number of years. Unfortunately, her relationship with her previous employers had broken down as she had stopped attending work due to the development of her depression and stress caused by her eviction after her landlord repossessed her home.

She had initially tried to seek help from Ealing Council after she became homeless, but they did not provide any assistance and she was then forced to sleep on the streets for many months.

We assisted Ms N by obtaining her P45 from her previous employers, which led to the completion of her Universal Credit application. We also helped her contact a local mental health charity that was able to provide her with a place in their rehabilitation hostel. In addition to this, we successfully obtained a grant from the charity of William Hobbayne for clothes and bedding that Ms N could use for her new life in her new home.



Casework & Operations Report

I am very pleased to report on the progress of our casework and development of our operations over the last year; this report demonstrates not only the range of legal work our caseworker service undertakes in both generalist and specialist areas but also different methods deployed through our specialist project work towards providing legal advice, guidance, support and where appropriate taking legal action to achieve our client's objectives. It is vital that our clients get the resolution which is in their best interests, as quickly as possible and acquire redress for their issues through the legal solutions we build for them. The purpose of this report is to give a greater understanding of the casework service we provide and an indication of the types of cases which we receive and deal with. The casework service is unique – that is only possible through the hard work and dedication of our legal practitioners and the volunteers that support them.

Casework & Advice Figures We delivered **projects** aimed (among others) at: alleviating poverty and destitution; hate crime; equality and human rights; community cohesion and integration. We provided help, information and general advice to over 3000 enquirers in various languages: delivering 450 individual telephone advice in the Arabic language and over 500 cases in Arabic

and Somali languages with our partner Ali from Daadal. This is in addition to 2050 advice, casework, advocacy, and free of charge in the areas of:

Housing

- Disrepair
- Notice seeking eviction
- Access to/provision of accommodation
- Temporary accommodation
- Judicial review
- Homelessness

Landlord Tenant

- Unlawful eviction
- Harassment
- Tenancy deposit abuse and dispute
- Overcrowding and multiple occupancy
- Breaches of tenancy & Anti-Social Behaviour
- Unlawful rent increases

Refugee Support Service

- Asylum & Refugee
- British nationality
- Naturalisation
- Unaccompanied minors
- Volunteering into work
- Trafficking & Human Rights

Social Welfare & Benefits

- Social security tribunals
- Housing benefit tribunals
- Employment support allowance
- Payment recovery
- Working / child tax credits
- Personal independence payments

Hate Crime /Incidents & Discrimination

- Physical attacks and violence
- Racist and verbal abuse
- Religious attacks
- Homophobic abuse
- Disability abuse
- Assistance at police stations

Family Law

- Access to children
- Ancillary relief
- Divorce
- Domestic violence
- Injections
- Financial settlements

Debt

- Unsecured loans
- Bankruptcy
- Fuel poverty
- Loan sharking / payday loans
- Credit agreements
- Bailiffs actions

Employment

- Zero-hour contracts
- Unlawful dismissal
- Breach of contract
- Pay & entitlements
- Early conciliation
- Unlawful redundancy



Anti-Poverty Service Delivery

We delivered anti-poverty help and support, advocacy and representation, in community languages, to 870 beneficiaries by means of 240 drop in and appointment surgeries at various locations in LBE, at Food banks in Ealing, Hanwell and Southall.

And delivered 15 Saturday advice surgeries at the University of West London in South Ealing, utilising the skills/expertise of alumni pro bono solicitors and barristers.

The average case-work support given amounted to around 20 hours per person. Some of the support were over several weeks and/or months and many persons we helped were in need of mental health and other services which we were able to signpost/refer them to. Some of these case are still ongoing after a year and can become more difficult due to the service user experiencing, for example, poverty/ mental health issues/family breakdown/DV or having no access to public funds.

Clients who experience deprivation via Universal Credits and PIP wrong/inaccurate decisions were in need of much hand-holding and support by our specialist caseworker. 17 Cases were won amounting to service users gains of over £97,000 per annum.

We also offered (100 advice sessions) the service at the 2 Food Banks where destitute persons were advised and their issues followed up during an average period of 2-3 months per person when we would assist them with accessing ESOL classes, housing, debt/financial and employment advice/support.

Delivered advice daily in Arabic and Somali and other community languages (around 800 hours) in order to offer the service to the new arrivals, including EU citizens: workers, and tenants, are particularly vulnerable to unscrupulous employers and rogue landlords due to unfamiliarity with the country, its laws, and the language. Often, they may be more willing to put up with abuse and poor living conditions and discrimination.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT – POSITIONED FOR THE FUTURE

We are positioned to help people into gainful employment taken from among Service Users, Volunteers, and Students.

Future projects will address:

- * Volunteering – Training people into work
- * Hate Crime Support Services funded by the Lottery
- * Anti-poverty work, including helping food bank clients
- * Community Advice and Support Services
- *Community Law Clinic daily and selective Saturdays – delivered with Alumni and Students of UWL
- * EUSS registration Home Office in partnership with ECVS
- * EU Erasmus Have your Say funded project – with partners in Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, Italy and us in the UK, Lead for WLEC by Joseph Karauli.

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Volunteers

Volunteers are the life blood of our organization and we salute their contribution.

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WLEC's Community Involvement.

- Member of NCVO
- Member of ROTA
- Member of HEAR
- Member of Advice UK
- Supporters of the Advice Forum
- Member of Ealing Community Network
- Member of Hounslow Community Network
- Member of the Homelessness Forum
- Member of West London Community Network
- The EEC Director is a Member of the Safer Ealing Partnership Executive
- Member of the Discrimination Law Association
- Member of Ealing Racial Crime Advisory Group
- Member of Ealing Community Network Executive
- Delivering as Chair the Hate Crime Operational Group
- Delivering as Chair the Ealing the Ealing Racial Crimes Advisory Group
- Member of the local Independent Advisory Group
- Member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum