



ISLINGTON PEOPLE'S RIGHTS
2010 ANNUAL
2011 REPORT

DELIVERING SPECIALIST WELFARE BENEFITS AND DEBT ADVICE IN ISLINGTON

- 2. Chair's Report
- 3. What We Do
- 4. Manager's Report
- 5. Case Studies
- 6. Who We Help
Organisational Structure
Thank You
- 7. Finance Report
- 8. Services of IPR

Welcome to the 2011 Annual Report of Islington People's Rights. In many ways IPR has come through a challenging year with real concerns that have caused difficulty for many charitable organisations.

I am pleased to say IPR has emerged stronger and more dynamic. It has continued to deliver high quality specialist advice in welfare benefits and debt in places convenient to those most in need. The impact of the Recession has made the demand for both welfare and debt advice to be higher than ever. Welfare reforms are having a great impact on the vulnerable members of society that most use our services and yet we know there is more to come that will have yet further impact on family budgets, homes and opportunities for work. Legal Aid reforms are likely to have a significant impact on both our clients and their ability to obtain specialist advice, and our funding and thereby our ability to provide that specialist advice.

IPR continues to evolve to meet these greater demands on our service and to ensure that we are prepared for the rough seas still to come. We shall always continue to ensure that we provide high quality and effective advice to the people of Islington.

This is my first Chair's Report, since I took on the role after the 2010 AGM. Having been an IPR Management Committee Member for several years, and having worked for the organisation in the past, I have an understanding and commitment to the work of IPR. It is an honour to serve the organisation and to support its work.

I should acknowledge the time and effort contributed by the other members of the management committee. This is not just through their governance role at meetings, but their involvement in the financial overview and other work. Lindsay Owen, the Vice Chair has assisted greatly particularly with her knowledge and understanding of Charities, and also Kris Murari who took over as treasurer this year with his specialist understanding of the world of money. Becky Hind who ably performed this role since 2009 will not be standing for re-election to the Committee, and we wish her well. We welcomed 2 new members to the Management Committee; Christine Usher and Stuart Moon whom we are already aware will make invaluable contributions over the next year. Arthur Ryser has been a committed member for years on the committee and we value his commitment to IPR.

I must take this opportunity to thank all the staff of IPR for their hard work over the year. It is the Specialist Caseworkers in particular who deliver the quality of advice that ensures that IPR remains the leading independent advice agency providing welfare benefits and debt advice in Islington. Gerard Omasta-Milsom, the Manager, has been able to consolidate the team and with his leadership and focused direction has been able to ensure that IPR has a more steady footing financially for the next few years. Maggie Pether, one of our Team Leaders, did move on last autumn, after several years of sterling service.

I should acknowledge the key support that Islington Council has continued to provide to IPR, during a year that has proved to be challenging for local authorities. I must also thank the local MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Emily Thornberry for their continued support. IPR is here to stay, and will always ensure that advocating for the rights of the people of Islington is our key purpose.

Sasere Obaseki
Chair

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Islington People's Rights
is a company limited
by guarantee
Registered in England
No. 1753440
Charity Commission
No. 1077688

We provide expert specialist advice and representation to marginalised individuals in and around Islington, particularly in welfare law and debt. IPR has a fierce commitment to a rights based approach and seeks to alleviate poverty and the effects of debt in and around Islington. IPR is one of the longest established legal advice centres in London, and has been in existence for over 41 years. It is a central focus for individuals and community groups who advocate for the disenfranchised.

IPR is proud of its track record of providing outreach sessions to clients at venues where they are already users of services. Our experience demonstrates that this model of providing advice is valued by our partners, funders and clients alike. We operate an appointment-only system, with most sessions delivered at different locations across Islington, through referrals. We do offer some appointments at our Manor Gardens premises in Holloway for those who cannot access outreach services. To make an appointment, you need to first discuss your case, by phoning our advice line 020 7561 3685 that operates on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays from 2-4pm.

We do not offer a drop in service to the public but provide a full specialist casework service. This means that for clients who need much more than initial advice to pursue a problem, we are able to provide support up to tribunal representation level and beyond if necessary. IPR pursues a successful outcome, whether the problem is welfare benefits or debt. The service we provide is free, confiden-

tial and independent of any other body or organisation.

We are particularly experienced in delivering services to clients with mental health issues, and have been doing so for over 25 years. Currently this involves delivering advice at the five Community Mental Health Centres (CMHTs) through Islington Social Services. Outreach Sessions are also provided linked to Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Services. We also provide advice to inmates at Pentonville Prison.

In EC1, we have been able to continue to provide appointments at the St Lukes Community Centre, through support from Islington Council. This is very valuable to clients in EC1 and surrounding areas, since it is far more convenient for them to be seen there, than our Holloway offices. Law-Works helped establish evening advice sessions at the St Lukes Community Centre, with support from the Law Firm, Nabarro LLP. City Law School enabled evening advice sessions to be provided at the Golden Lane Campus. Both of these evening sessions provide advice in all areas of law. A full list of our outreach sessions are listed on the back page of this report.

IPR is proud of its record of providing a friendly and informal service that produces results.

Jeremy Corbyn addressed the 2010 IPR AGM; the other speaker was Cllr Catherine West, Leader of Islington Council, (far left). Also featured are Sasere Obaseki, Chair of IPR (second from left) and Becky Hind, former Treasurer of IPR

PHOTO: CLARE JEPHCOTT



I have now been the Manager at Islington People's Rights (IPR) for over 2 years. During that time the organisation has consolidated its position as the leading specialist welfare benefits casework provider in Islington, notably with regard to tribunal representation. It also provides specialist debt advice, including as an approved intermediary for the purposes of Debt Relief Orders (DROs). It has a strong, experienced and dedicated staff team, and an excellent reputation. Demand for our services has never been higher; hardly surprising during this period of economic austerity, and with major welfare reforms taking place, and more in the pipeline. Most of our clients are very much the most vulnerable and needy of society, and likely to be adversely affected by many of the reforms proposed.

Key contracts and funding have come up for renewal, and ensuring the financial stability and sustainability of the organisation has been my priority. We secured the Mental Health Welfare Benefits Contract last year, that runs at least until 2015, primarily providing advice services at the 5 Community Mental Health Centres (CMHTs) in Islington. We secured a new 3 year Legal Services Contract (LSC) Contract in Welfare Benefits and Debt Categories of law, that we began to deliver on the 15 November 2010. The core contract to supply legal advice services to Islington residents, funded by Islington Council runs to March 2012, and prospects look good for further funding from the local authority. We continue to deliver the contract for benefits advice to offenders, at 4 venues linked to drug and alcohol rehabilitation services. We have secured specific funding from Pentonville Prison to deliver advice to inmates, at least until April 2012. We secured a Transition Fund grant from the Cabinet Office, which is enabling us to undertake additional work around business planning, income generation and the sustainability of the organisation.

IPR evidently faces new challenges. Local Authorities, NHS related bodies, and other statutory funders are facing challenges of their own in terms of funding levels and budgets. Islington Council has been extremely supportive to the major advice agencies in the Borough, in spite of the challenges it faces. A new Islington Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) opened its doors in April 2011 on Upper Street, funded by Islington Council, and IPR has developed good links with the CAB. Islington Council undertook a major consultation exercise through the Islington Fairness Commission and is seeking to progress the key priorities and recommendations identified.

IPR has observed increased levels of financial insecurity amongst its clients, during this period of economic austerity and welfare reform. This is likely to have longer term impacts and result in increased needs for representation. Employment Support Allowance (ESA), which has replaced incapacity benefit for new claimants, is having considerable impact on many vulnerable clients. This has resulted in increased appeals against negative decisions, and a long backlog at tribunal level. Vulnerable clients will require great levels of support in being successful at ESA appeals. It is clear that many vulnerable clients, like those with mental health problems are finding it difficult to comply with the new benefit rules. Changes in relation to housing benefit with capping of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) introduced will have a significant impact, particularly in a London borough like Islington. We are about to embark on a new project with the North London Housing Partnership, and funding from the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), with a particular focus on assisting those adversely affected by the LHA changes.

We may be focussed on service delivery, but we should also play a social policy role and influence decision makers. By providing free, high-quality independent welfare rights and money advice, we help local people maximise their incomes, enforce their rights, and develop their potential. I am committed to ensure that this really happens, and that IPR grows from strength to strength.

Gerard Omasta-Milsom
Manager



IPR, Islington Law Centre and Islington CAB worked together through the Justice for All Campaign, and put on an event on the 3 June 2011. This highlighted that the Government's proposals for legal aid will deny many people access to justice. This was addressed by (from left to right), Gerard Omasta-Milsom, Manager IPR; Cllr Catherine West, Leader of Islington Council; Ruth Hayes, Director, Islington Law Centre and Jeremy Corbyn MP
PHOTO: CLARE JEPHCOTT

Ms G suffers from Chronic Fatigue syndrome. She has various disabling physical symptoms on a daily basis including body pains, migraines, nausea, and is unable to move for much of the time. She has a young son who lives with her and an older daughter who helps to care for her. She also relies on neighbours and friends to help her at home. She was receiving Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at the middle rate for mobility and the lower rate for care in addition to Income Support.

Early in 2010 Ms G applied to renew her DLA. When it was refused, she contacted Islington People's Rights. Her caseworker interviewed her about her disability, obtained the evidence used and reasons for the decision to refuse DLA, challenged these reasons and asked for the DLA to be looked at again.

In June 2010 Ms G attended medical examination in which she was interviewed by a DWP Medical Adviser about her condition. Based on this examination it was decided that she was capable of work and so her Incapacity Benefit was stopped. Ms G felt that the doctor at this examination had misrepresented what she had said and that she had been treated unfairly.

Also on the basis of this examination, the decision to refuse DLA was upheld. Ms G had several interviews with IPR, in which she explained her issues. Her caseworker drafted appeals on behalf of Ms G and obtained evidence from her doctor, family and friends which showed that she was clearly too ill to work.

Ms G's appeal hearings were not scheduled until a year later, in June 2011. In the meantime she was left to live on a reduced amount of benefits.

Ms G gave oral evidence at both hearings for Incapacity Benefit and DLA and was represented by her caseworker from IPR.

Her appeals were successful. Her Incapacity Benefit was reinstated and her Income Support was put back to the original amount she had been receiving, with arrears paid for the time it had been reduced. She was awarded DLA at the middle rate for care and the lower rate for mobility. Because of this she also became entitled to the Severe Disability Premium, an extra £50 per week paid with Income Support. Her DLA was awarded indefinitely, with arrears going back over a year to the time her renewal application was refused. Ms G's caseworker checked with her that these arrears had been paid.

Ms G received total arrears of over £10,000 making life for herself, her family and others who care for her considerably easier.

Miss F had to stop working because of mental health problems including Bipolar disorder and severe anxiety. She lived on benefits including Disability Living Allowance. Miss F's spending became out of control when she wasn't feeling well. This was one of the symptoms of her illness and because of this her debt had mounted to £11,000. When she started to receive letters and phone calls from her creditors demanding repayment, Miss F's anxiety became worse and eventually she became so agitated that she felt unable to deal with her finances or even to open her letters.

Miss F's doctor was concerned about the impact of her money problems on Miss F's health and referred her to Islington People's Rights. She saw our Debt Relief Order Approved Intermediary who discussed Miss F's financial situation with her, drew up a budget and financial statement, and went through the various options. These included negotiating repayments with creditors, filing for bankruptcy, or applying for a Debt Relief Order. With the debt being under £15,000 and with no chance of Miss F returning to work or paying back the debts, our advisor decided it was appropriate to apply for a Debt Relief Order.

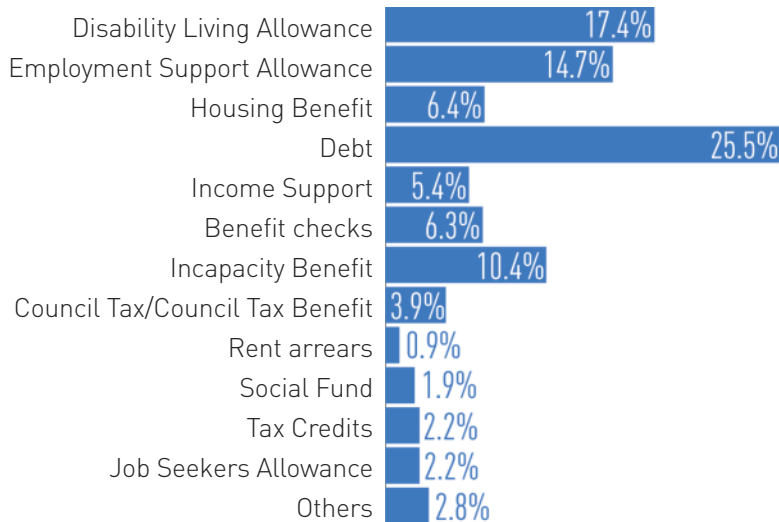
The application was made online, with the client, and after a couple of days Insolvency Services wrote back informing us that Miss F's application had been approved.

Insolvency Services gave Miss F a date 12 months from the initial application, by which time all debts will be written off. If there are any changes of circumstances within the twelve month period, for example Miss F returning to work, the Debt Relief Order is to be revoked. In the meantime Insolvency Services are writing to all of Miss F's creditors informing them of the DRO. This means that they cannot contact her to demand repayment.

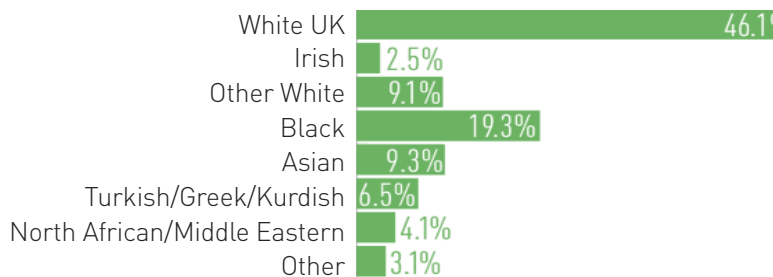
Miss F has experienced a remarkable improvement in her mental health, particularly the anxiety. With the sense of relief at having sorted out her debt problems, she now feels able to make a fresh start.

BASIC STATISTICS

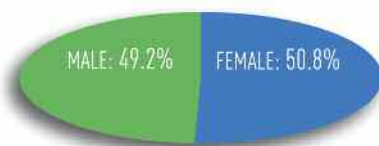
THE ISSUES



ETHNICITY



GENDER



DISABILITY



THANK YOU

Trusts, Foundations and Statutory Bodies

Islington Council
NHS Islington
Legal Services Commission
EC1 Support Fund
Pentonville Prison

Charitable Trusts

Richard Cloudesley's Charity
RL Glasspool Charity Trust
Cripplegate Foundation

We also wish to extend our gratitude to the following for their invaluable help during 2010-11

Advice UK
LawWorks
Nabarro LLP
City Law School, City University
St Luke's Centre and Trust

GERARD OMASTA-MILSON

Manager

FERESHTEH PANAH

Specialist caseworker

JOHN SPRIGGS

Specialist caseworker

GLORIA HILL

Specialist caseworker

SUSANA ARPOSIO

Locum caseworker

HETTY WAKEFORD

Administrator

TRUSTEES

SASERE OBASEKI

Chair

LINDSAY OWEN

Vice-Chair

KRISHAN MURARI

Treasurer

BECKY HIND

CHRISTINE USHER

Additionally:

JOHN MULDOON (until November 2010)

BEN HARRISON (until November 2010)

ELIZABETH GEORGE (until November 2010)

STAFF CHANGES

Staff who left IPR during 2010-2011

MAGGIE PETHER

Team Leader

IT support from

RJ PARTNERS

Accountancy support from

LOUISE ALEXANDER

DEREK JACKSON

Specialist caseworker

Supported by TRUDY TIERNAN & ANNA REINOSO

FISSEHA HABTE-MARIAM

Specialist caseworker

SHALINI CONN

Specialist caseworker

ARTHUR RYSER

STUART MOON

Summary of year end position as at 31 March 2011

	2011		2010	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets		1,814		4,502
Total fixed assets		1,814		4,502
Current assets				
Debtors	43,064		23,534	
Cash at bank and in hand	74,914		47,252	
Total current assets	117,978		70,786	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(39,119)		(44,468)	
Net current assets		78,859		26,318
Total assets less current liabilities		80,673		30,820
The funds of the charity:				
Restricted funds		68,900		3,000
Unrestricted funds:				
General fund	11,773		27,820	
Total unrestricted funds		11,773		27,820
Total charity funds		80,673		30,820

Summary of Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2011

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2011 £	Total Funds 2010 £
Incoming resources				
Incoming resources from generated funds:				
Voluntary income	76,000	–	76,000	25
Investment income	–	139	139	287
Incoming resources from charitable activities	–	277,583	277,583	344,276
Other incoming resources	–	–	–	–
Total incoming resources	76,000	277,722	353,722	344,588
Resources expended				
Costs of generating funds	–	9,767	9,767	4,135
Charitable activities	10,100	279,563	289,663	395,890
Governance costs	–	4,439	4,439	4,121
Total resources expended	10,100	293,769	303,869	404,146
Net income/(expenditure)	65,900	(16,047)	49,853	(59,558)
Management charges	–	–	–	–
Net movement in funds	65,900	(16,047)	49,853	(59,558)
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	3,000	27,820	30,820	90,378
Total funds carried forward	68,900	11,773	80,673	30,820

8 SERVICES OF IPR

We provide free advice and representation, particularly in the areas of welfare law and debt.

We provide the majority of our services through outreach sessions listed below. We also offer a number of appointments at our Manor Gardens premises for those who cannot access our outreach services. To make an appointment, you need to first discuss your case, by phoning our advice line 020 7561 3685. This is open from 2-4pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.

CONTACT	LOCATION	TELEPHONE No
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTRES (APPOINTMENT VIA CENTRE)		
Archway	1 Lowther Road, N7 8US	020 3317 6370
Calshot	11 Southwood Smith Street, N1 0YL	020 3317 4850
Canonbury	11 Southwood Smith Street, N1 0YL	020 3317 4850
Drayton	1 Lowther Road, N7 8US	020 3317 6370
Elthorne	17-23 Beaumont Rise, N19 3AX	020 3317 6200
DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES (APPOINTMENT VIA SERVICE)		
Cranstoun Drug Services	28B King Henry's Walk, N1 4PB	020 7923 8010
ISIS North	99 Seven Sisters Road, N7 7QP	020 7272 1231
NIDS (North Islington Drug Service)	592 Holloway Road, N7 6LB	020 3317 6240
SIDS (South Islington Drug Service)	309 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8QS	020 3317 6650
EC1		
St Luke's Community Centre	90 Central Street, EC1V 8AJ	Appt via IPR 020 7561 3685
PRISONS & OTHER SERVICES		
HMP Pentonville	Via Resettlement	
LAW ADVICE EVENING SESSIONS (APPOINTMENT ONLY)		
St Luke's Community Centre	90 Central Street, EC1V 8AJ	020 7549 8181
City Law School Legal Advice Session	Golden Lane Campus	020 7786 4800