



Annual Review 2015-2016



Introduction

Islington People's Rights (IPR) is the leading agency in Islington delivering targeted specialist welfare benefits and debt advice, with many years experience of delivering outreach sessions. IPR has operated as an independent advice centre since 1969, with a strong track record in supporting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society.

IPR continually develops and evolves its service provision to help local people maximise their incomes, enforce their rights and develop their potential as equal citizens.

We advocate for some of the most marginalised people in our community. Most of our work takes place in community settings throughout Islington ensuring local impact. We are particularly proud of our current services which focus on those with; mental health issues, disabilities, drug and alcohol problems, as well as on carers, ex-offenders and those linked to certain Black Asian Minority Ethnic and Refugee Organisations (BAMER) communities. These individuals in particular need the help of IPR and its experienced caseworkers. All IPR's caseworkers have over five years experience of specialist welfare benefits and debt work, including tribunal appeals and representation.

This Annual Review charts the progress we have made during another challenging year of work for disadvantaged communities in Islington. IPR is an organisation that strives to alleviate the worst effects of poverty, inequality and austerity in Islington.



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From left: IPR's Chair,
Tim Aldridge,
Carolina Gottardo,
Director of the
Latin American Women's
Rights Service and
Cllr Richard Watts,
Leader of Islington Council
addressing the
IPR 2015 AGM

Photo by Clare Jephcott



Chair's Report

IPR has built on its strengths over the last year. We have supported more people, achieved improved outcomes and consolidated our funding. These achievements have come about through the commitment of a great team of staff and my fellow trustees. Over the year we assisted over 2,500 clients; around 70% identified as being disabled, many with mental health issues.

The last 12 months have marked a period of consolidation for IPR. We now have grant funding from Islington Council confirmed until March 2020, which enables us to plan for the future. We have secured 2 year continuation funding from Trust for London to October 2018 for the Access+ project, working with BAMER communities. We have also secured grants from charitable trusts for both Disability Focus and our work with carers. Funding from the Big Lottery Local Sustainability Fund, has enabled us to devote additional resources towards ensuring our sustainability. At the same time we have continued to provide a high quality service across a number of community venues with good outcomes and a high level of client satisfaction. Clearly our aims for next year are to maintain and improve the quality of our activities.

Demand for our services continues to grow, related to both ongoing welfare reforms and the current economic climate. Many of our beneficiaries have been adversely affected by recent changes in the welfare system. The new Benefit Cap means several hundred Islington residents are facing difficulties. Universal Credit is being introduced, replacing many benefits for those of working age and presenting challenges.

Having become a trustee of IPR in 2011 and the Chair for the last two years, I am now standing down as Chair. The role has been hugely fulfilling, and it has been great to see the organisation go from strength to strength, despite the challenging funding environment. This is due to our dedicated staff, trustees, volunteers, funders and supporters and I feel confident for IPR's future and feel that we can look positively to 2017 and beyond.

Tim Aldridge



IPR Core Service

IPR's Core Service is funded by Islington Council and provides free targeted specialist welfare benefits and debt advice to residents of the borough. It is very positive to report that these grant funding arrangements are now confirmed to March 2020, with new service arrangements in place since the 1st October 2016. We offer a telephone advice line and appointments at both the Manor Gardens Centre in Holloway and the St Luke's Community Centre in the south of the borough. Over the year we received over 9,000 enquiries and supported 2,750 clients. We assisted over 100 residents with Welfare Benefit Appeal Tribunal cases, through submissions and representation, with a success rate of over 90%. Many others were assisted in terms of decisions being rectified and successful outcomes without the need for an actual appeal hearing.

Much of our welfare benefits casework currently relates to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) formerly Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Employment and Support Allowance and linked Work Capability Assessments, appeals and tribunals. We envisage the new benefit cap and roll out of Universal Credit to result in additional demand for specialist welfare benefits advice and casework support.

Our specialist debt advice often overlaps with our welfare benefits casework. Many clients have high levels of debt as a result of problems with their benefits as well as those on low incomes. IPR assists with all aspects including Debt Relief Orders (DROs) and bankruptcy proceedings. IPR is part of Islington Debt Coalition; a partnership of organisations led by Islington Council, working to tackle debt in Islington.

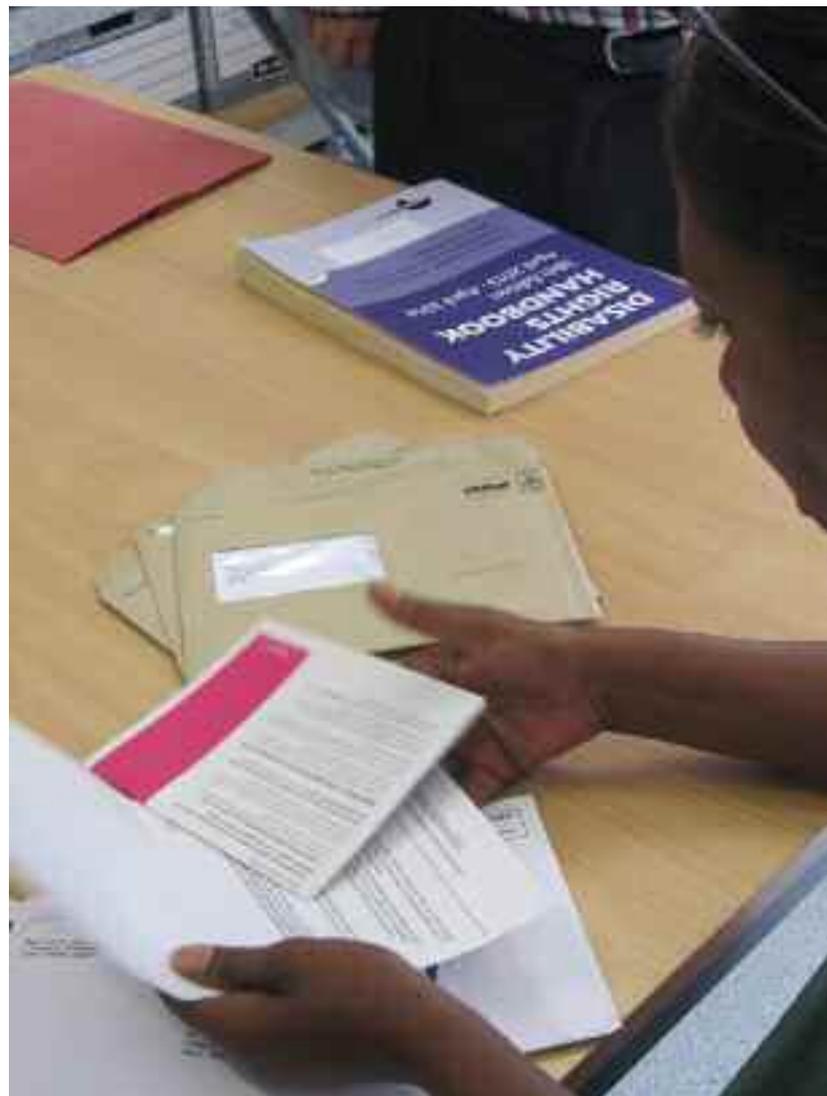
Prevention Services

IPR provides specialist welfare benefits and debt advice at five venues, in conjunction with the Prevention Joint Commissioning Team. This team was established in January 2016 jointly by the Council and the Islington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The team commissions a range of services that support residents' wellbeing and independence so that they can be helped to avoid developing needs for care and support. These services show how the Council and its partners seek to intervene early to help residents address problems and prevent them from becoming ingrained.

A Prevention Providers Forum has been established which includes IPR. Services are delivered through regular weekly sessions at four community mental health venues and one drug and alcohol service; all listed on the back cover. Over 700 clients with mental ill health were supported in the year with their welfare rights and debt problems.

Evening Legal Advice Sessions

These take place at the St Luke's Community Centre in EC1 with staff from city law firm Nabarro LLP.



Funded by

- ✿ Provides debt and welfare rights advice sessions to those in need within key Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) communities by working directly with community partners
- ✿ Delivers training and support to partners to develop their expertise whilst improving the overall quality of advice they offer

IPR launched Access+ in November 2014 providing tailored support and advice sessions with local BAMER organisations, to help improve the quality of the advice services that they offer to their communities.

Access+ provides fortnightly half day appointment sessions at partner's premises, plus follow up casework to achieve successful outcomes for clients. We are working with five key Islington based partners; Arab Advice Bureau, Eritrean Community in the United Kingdom, Islington Chinese Association, Islington Somali Community and Latin American Women's Rights Service.

By the end of two years we have helped over 1,000 people with welfare benefits and debt advice. Many more people have been supported indirectly as a result of the activities. The two year project is being evaluated to ensure that it makes a strategic contribution well beyond Islington and the partners directly involved. The School of Social Sciences at London Metropolitan University is leading on this evaluation.

We have recently had confirmation of another two years funding for Access+ from Trust for London. This will enable us to further develop the project and this already involves collaboration with others supporting the BAMER sector, notably the Enhance Project at Resource for London.

Funded by



IPR Advance



- ❁ Provided specialist support to ex-offenders leaving custody to boost resettlement with a focus on those with drug and alcohol issues
- ❁ Reduced high levels of re-offending amongst problem drug and alcohol users

The IPR Advance project began in October 2013, thanks to a three-year grant from City Bridge Trust, the City of London Corporation's charity.

IPR Advance focused on helping ex-offenders, particularly those affected by drug and alcohol issues, with their welfare benefits and debt problems. The sessions formed a key part of a package of support for clients that improved their resettlement and helped reduce re-offending rates.

Income maximisation is key to this client group, who often find themselves struggling to get their lives back together following release from custody. The project complemented the activities of specialist drugs and alcohol agencies and the Probation Service in Islington by ensuring that their clients had access to specialist advice. Working with these agencies, we looked to help break the cycle of offending and re-offending and put in place the building blocks for more stable lives in the community.

Over the 3 year period, weekly sessions took place at Cranstoun Drug Services in N1, Islington Drug and Alcohol Specialist Services (IDASS) in N7 and Probation in EC1. Over 700 one-to-one appointments were provided to ex-offenders engaging with over 500 people. Our monitoring shows positive reductions in re-offending for those who had recently left prison. We also provided a number of group work sessions reaching many more individuals.



Funded by the
City Bridge Trust

"Thanks to IPR I was able to keep my flat. I have met others in my situation who have lost everything – their homes, possessions, family, everything"

Case Studies

Charlotte is a single person living in a Council flat, with several children and mental health issues, notably anxiety and depression. She was referred to IPR since she was facing eviction due to rent arrears, and was very distressed. This was a result of housing benefit having been stopped due to issues around her other benefits. We contacted the Council, making clear she was a single parent with disabilities, including evidence of her mental health problems. We believe that she had stopped opening letters, which had made things more complicated. She had thought that her Housing Benefit was being paid until she opened the eviction notice. We asked for a review of the decision that stopped her Housing Benefit, but then realised she was affected by the benefit cap. We advised her to apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and assisted her with this. She was awarded PIP which makes her exempt from the cap. With further specialist help we sorted out her housing issues with payments being agreed towards her rent, and to ensure she retained her rented property. This clearly contributed to an improvement in her situation and her children's.

"I don't know what I would have done if IPR had not helped me - I could easily have ended up on the streets"



Julie was a single person living in rented accommodation who came to IPR with debts totalling over £11,000. She had these debts for many years and had been in receipt of disability benefits since 1980. She had got to the point where she recognised creditor's letters and put them in a drawer. She has anxiety and depression and mental health support services had advised her to deal with the debts. She was referred to IPR for help with the debts - mainly credit cards, store cards and loans. Julie was very distressed at the first meeting with the reality of her debts. We explained to her that all her debts were 'non-priority' and she would not lose her home or go to court for non-payment.

We checked Julie's benefit entitlement and her expenditure as we do for all clients. We realised she had been underpaid in her benefits by £61.10 per week for a long time. We contacted Jobcentre Plus on her behalf and asked that they look at her entitlements and award any underpayment. They recalculated her benefits and were able to go back to award her the shortfall in line with changes in benefit entitlement. The client received a lump sum payment of over £6,000 and a regular increase of £61.10 per week. Clearly her debts had partly built up as a result of her income shortfall, and we were able to look at them again as she was able to pay weekly amounts to clear them. There were clearly various items like new curtains, carpets and shoes that Julie needed and she will now be able to buy them.

"You are life savers. I feel like a great weight has been taken off my shoulders"

IPR Focus

IPR Focus offers additional support for disabled residents. Focus offers support to people who have multiple disabilities. All too often they are not receiving the support they need to retain their independence. For example, we have seen a marked increase in demand from people with learning difficulties, clearly linked to struggling to complete the necessary applications. In 2013, 41% of Islington residents receiving out of work benefits had been doing so for 5 years or more.

Residents that are out of work due to sickness and disability includes but is not limited to people claiming Incapacity Benefit, and Employment and Support Allowance. According to the DWP, there were 12,300 Islington residents claiming these benefits. Someone with severe disabilities has faced cuts 19 times greater than the average person; a combination of benefit, housing and social care cuts. Early in 2016 it was reported that Ministers have signalled a new shake-up of disability benefits that could see funding for “aids and appliances” resulting in cuts of up to £150 a week for more than half a million people nationally.

IPR Focus is funded by grants from several charitable trusts, notably the Three Oaks Trust.



IPR Care

IPR provided a carers service during 2015/16 funded by Islington Social Services. It was delivered fortnightly in partnership with Islington Carers Hub working with carers throughout the borough. It offered specialist advice, casework and representation primarily in relation to welfare benefits although debt issues were also tackled. Many cases became complex, since on occasion the benefits entitlements of the carer and the person being cared for were interrelated, notably when both were family members. Many required tribunal representation. The Care Act 2014, meant that carers had greater rights from April 2015.

The project went well, and we knew there would be high demand from carers, given the range of welfare reforms taking place. During the year IPR saw 68 clients through this new fortnightly service. It ensured that carers and those they cared for, could access the specialist advice they needed. All 68 had successful outcomes with their financial situations improved and stabilised, helping them to live more independently. In some cases we ensured that they retained a roof over their heads by dealing with rent arrears and income maximisation. The one year pilot project ended in March 2016, but we will be launching IPR Care in Islington in November 2016, with funding confirmed from several trusts.

Who's Involved

IPR took part in the London Legal Walk in 2016, organised by the London Legal Support Trust, and a grand total of £2437.88 was raised for IPR. It is a very pleasant 10km sponsored walk around Central London, and plans are already underway to take part in the 2017 London Legal Walk on Monday 22 May 2017, do get in touch if you are interested in participating to raise much needed funds for IPR.



Featured in the photo are 6 members of the 2016 IPR team, from left to right, Paul Harper (Finance Manager), Trudy Tiernan (Support Worker), Toyosi Akinfemiwa, Bahar Choudhary (Trustees), Gerard Omasta-Milsom (Chief Executive), Henrietta Cooke (Treasurer).

Chief Executive

Gerard Omasta-Milsom

Finance Manager

Paul Harper

Specialist Caseworkers

Fereshteh Panah
John Spriggs
Gloria Hill

Derek Jackson
Fisseha Habte-Mariam
Shalini Conn

Locum Caseworkers

Susana Arposio
Joanie Wilkinson
Maggie Pether

Michael Nwosu
Jayne Okacha

Administrators

Anna Reinoso
Jagruti Depala

Support Worker

Trudy Tiernan

Trustees

Tim Aldridge (Chair)
Matt Brown (Vice Chair)
Kay Booth (Vice Chair)
Michael Wüstefeld-Gray
Henrietta Cooke (Treasurer)
Krishan Murari

Anna Murray
Joanna Givens
Helen Laker
Arthur Ryser
Toyosi Akinfemiwa
Bahar Choudhary

Sandrine Palmer (until November 2015)
Christine Usher (until November 2015)

IT Support
Website Support
Fundraising Support

RJ Partners
Bootleweb
Mike Butler, Pilot
Tim Clark



Our Future

IPR continually reviews its activities and priorities to determine future strategy and ensure the relevance of its services. A key part of this approach is an annual AwayDay when we bring together trustees, staff and other stakeholders, to look at the ways in which the charity should develop going forward. The aim is to ensure that IPR retains its original purpose and continues to develop its activities to meet the changing needs of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

Local Sustainability Fund

In 2016 IPR learned that it had been successful with an application to the Big Lottery's Local Sustainability Fund. This project includes a range of activities designed to diversify and broaden the charity's funding base and forge stronger links with key stakeholders, businesses and others in and around Islington. In addition, volunteering initiatives and pro-bono work will be developed further as well as improving our web and social media presence. With major welfare reforms taking place it is critical that IPR continues to deliver high quality services. This means additional training for caseworkers to ensure they can deliver the specialist advice required.

Research and Social Policy Work

In the last Annual Review we reported that IPR was keen to take forward more formal research about the needs of those that we work with. This could include IPR campaigning on key issues in order to influence policy makers and effect positive change for service users. It is a recognition that our current work produces significant amounts of data about poverty and inequality in our catchment area.

Over the last year we have begun working with London Metropolitan University to deliver external evaluation and social policy work. The first project that this collaboration has focused on is the Access+ project through the School of Social Sciences. This is evaluating the impact of the welfare benefits and debt advice sessions to those in need within key Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee communities, as well as the capacity building support provided. Already we are seeing the potential that this collaboration can offer for both IPR and other advice agencies throughout the UK.

Islington MP and IPR supporter Jeremy Corbyn addressing the 2015 AGM via a video link from the House of Commons



Photo by Clare Jephcott

Accounts Summary for the year ended 31 March 2016

	Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
Incoming resources		
Investment income	588	663
Incoming resources from charitable activities	428,645	431,505
Total incoming resources	430,664	432,168
Resources expended		
Cost of generating funds	3,415	4,692
Charitable activities	433,730	420,782
Governance costs	5,013	4,546
Total resources expended	442,158	430,020
Net income/(expenditure)	(11,494)	2,148
Reconciliation of funds		
Total funds brought forward	167,798	165,650
Total funds carried forward	156,304	167,798
Funds of the charity		
Restricted funds		
Designated funds	22,500	15,000
Unrestricted funds	133,804	152,798

Copies of the full audited accounts for 2015/2016 are available on the Charity Commission website or from IPR

Key Funders

Islington Council	Big Lottery Fund
City Bridge Trust	Cloudesley
Trust for London	Three Oaks Trust
Allen & Overy Foundation	Islington CCG

Thank you also to the following organisations for their support

Advice UK	London Legal Support Trust
Nabarro LLP	Morris Charitable Trust
LawWorks	Manor Gardens Welfare Trust
DWP Access to Work	St Luke's Centre & Trust
Persula Foundation	Souter Charitable Trust
London Metropolitan University	



Service Information

The Advice Line is open Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays 2-4pm on 020 7561 3685

Appointments are booked through the Advice Line and take place at the Manor Gardens Centre in Holloway, or St Luke's Community Centre in EC1

IPR provides outreach sessions through mental health, drug and alcohol agencies. Appointments can be directly booked by contacting the venues direct, sessions are weekly. Most sessions are weekly, booked up to 2 weeks in advance through mental health, drug and alcohol services.

Mental Health Services - appointment via centre

- ✿ North Rehabilitation and Recovery Team, 1 Lowther Road N7 8US
- ✿ South Rehabilitation and Recovery Team, 11 Southwood Smith Street N1 0YL
- ✿ Islington Crisis Resolution Team (ICRT), Highgate Mental Health Centre, Dartmouth Park Hill, N19 5NX
- ✿ iCope, 10 Manor Gardens, London N7 6JS

Drug and Alcohol Services – appointment via centre

- ✿ Cranstoun Drug Services, 28b King Henry's Walk N1 4PB

Legal Advice Evening Session - appointment via centre

This session provides employment, housing and consumer rights advice, as well as welfare benefits and debt advice.

- ✿ St Luke's Community Centre, 90 Central Street EC1V 8AJ - 020 7549 8181



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Company registered in England no. 1753440

