

ipr@50

50 years of tackling poverty



Introduction

Islington People's Rights is (IPR) is the leading agency in Islington delivering specialist welfare benefits and debt advice. IPR has many years experience delivering outreach sessions assisting vulnerable groups of people of all ages.

IPR has operated as an independent advice centre since 1969, with a strong track record of service delivery and support for the most vulnerable in society. Now, in our 50th year, demand has never been greater and the level of need never higher.

There are 47,000 children and young people living in Islington and a 2019 report by End Child Poverty reveals that nearly half, 22,000 live in poverty. Breakfast clubs are provided at some schools because parents cannot afford to feed their children.

Our links with local communities enable us to reach the most vulnerable individuals and IPR is well known for its focus on alleviating the worst effects of poverty, inequality and austerity in Islington. The following pages detail our services and also special projects supporting carers and families with children with multiple disabilities.

After 50 years our focus remains on making sure that the voices of our users remain at the heart of everything that we do.



Photo by Hassan Nezamian



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Jeremy Corbyn MP, Dan Norris, Head of Advice and Rights at Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), Linda Perham, Chair of the Thames Water Trust Fund, Matt Brown, former IPR Chair and Henrietta Cooke, IPR Treasurer and Acting Chair, at the IPR AGM 2018



Photo by Lin Knapp

After yet another busy year I'm very pleased to introduce our 2018-2019 Annual Review. First some headline figures for the year:

- ✳ One to one support provided to over **2,500** people
- ✳ IPR helped over **120** clients win benefits tribunal appeals
- ✳ Over **75%** of IPR clients are disabled
- ✳ We increased the incomes of numerous clients, totalling over **£1 million**

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of IPR. The funding environment in which we exist is as challenging as ever and it feels a significant achievement to have survived as long as we have. This year we continued to develop our services benefiting the most vulnerable members of the community. This includes protecting many families and others against some of the very real problems associated with the roll out of Universal Credit.

Particular thanks must go to the London Borough of Islington for their outstanding commitment to advice provision in the face of austerity and the tremendous pressure on their budgets. Thank you also to the trusts and other supporters that have recognised the importance of our work and provided grants and donations. Every penny has been used to transform people's prospects. Some of their stories appear in the pages that follow.

I must express my gratitude for the contribution of Matt Brown, IPR's Chair in recent years, who has now moved to Islington Law Centre – a key partner for IPR in Islington. Also to my fellow trustees for their dedication to everything that we do.

Finally, a big thank-you to all of the staff and volunteers that make IPR the catalyst for positive change that it is today. Every day they are working hard to lift people out of poverty and towards brighter futures. As long as that need exists, we will work hard to ensure that IPR is there to help.



50 years of tackling poverty in the borough

Following the introduction of the welfare state after the Second World War welfare benefits offered a safety net to prevent people falling into abject poverty. In the 1960s a welfare rights movement began to emerge and the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) was founded in 1965. It called on the government to increase family allowances to combat family poverty.

IPR was founded in 1969 as a branch of CPAG under the name 'Islington Poverty Action Group'. The original offices were at 2 St Paul's Road and were shared with Islington Gutter Press, Islington Play Association, Rights of Women and the Advisory Service for Squatters.

In the 1970s people did not know what benefits were available, let alone how to access them. IPR designed handbooks to inform residents. Compiling them was a huge task involving the efforts of 40 volunteers.

During the 1970s, following an economic downturn, huge pressure was put on the welfare state, with some arguing it was becoming unaffordable. As a consequence there were cuts to welfare spending and means testing was introduced.

Then, as today, there was stigma associated with applying for benefits. Research carried out in 1973 estimated that only between 12-19% of Islington residents who lived below the poverty line were receiving the welfare benefits that were rightfully theirs.



The original home of IPR at 2 St Paul's Road



Queue outside Kings Cross Employment Office, Barnsbury Road, 1980s

© Islington Local History Centre

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s IPR steadily grew and became more established expanding the range of advice services it offered throughout Islington. By the 2000s it had become a strong organisation and a registered charity. It proved again and again that it could weather the ongoing storms of welfare change and Government cuts. The organisation moved to Manor Gardens, where it continues to operate to this day.

During 2019 IPR is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a programme of events and activities. IPR will have an exhibition at Islington Museum from 2nd November 2019 to the 21st January 2020, which will tell the story of the organisation over the years. The IPR@50 programme includes guided walks in Islington tracing key places important to the struggle for people's rights. There are also meetings on Universal Credit and Debt, activities for under 5s, and drop in advice sessions to tackle people's current problems.

In the 1970s the IPR Handbook provided essential information for local people. Compiling it involved the efforts of 40 volunteers.



“IPR helped me so much, as I struggled as a single parent to make ends meet. The impact of the benefits cuts meant that I was worse off, and I wasn't coping. The IPR adviser helped me claim everything I was entitled to. I don't think the Government realises the impact of the changes on those who depend on benefits. IPR treated me with dignity and respect, and as a young black woman that meant so much to me.”
Ms G 1987

Our Future

IPR has spent the last 50 years looking ahead and this is as true today as it was in 1969. This means responding to the ever changing needs with innovative services and new projects targeted at those who need our support each and every day. Over the next year a key target is to generate funds for our work to help families with disabled children.

IPR KidsSupport

Many families with children with disabilities or long term health conditions have financial difficulties and fail to access the benefits they need. Often through lack of time or knowledge of the system they approach IPR seeking help to address a financial crisis. Our caseworkers can help with the complicated process of securing Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which remains for children under the age of 16.



IPR KidsSupport has been created as a dedicated service for these families. In addition to welfare benefits advice and help with addressing debt issues we can also link people with specialist disability organisations locally for further support.

Following a start up grant from Cloudesley we are now working hard to attract further funds for this project and to expand it to meet demand.

IPR's Core Service delivers targeted specialist advice in relation to welfare benefits and debt focusing on the most vulnerable, notably those with disabilities, including mental health issues and learning difficulties. This is provided free to Islington residents, and includes targeted advice, casework and representation. It is funded by Islington Council through the Islington Strategic Advice Partnership (ISAP), which also includes Islington Law Centre, Citizens Advice Islington, Help on Your Doorstep and the Islington BAMER Advice Alliance.

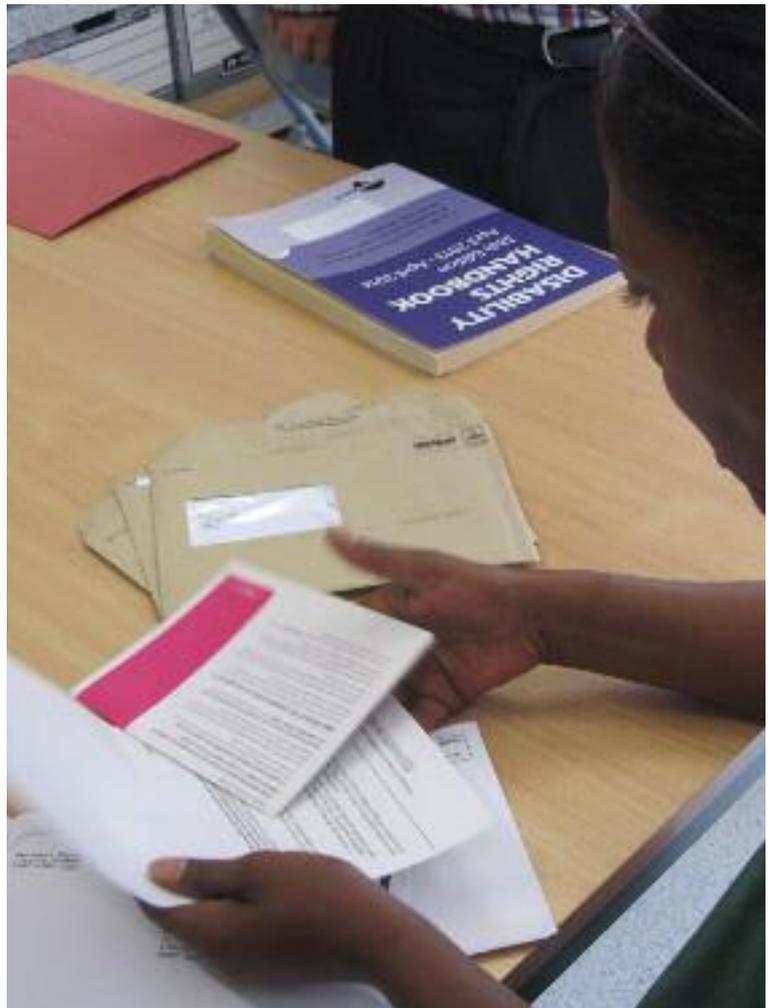
The Core Service has repeatedly demonstrated strong outcomes for clients around maximising incomes and resolving debt problems. IPR holds the Specialist Quality Mark in both Welfare Benefits and Debt awarded by the Legal Aid Agency. We are approved intermediaries for the purposes of delivering Debt Relief Orders (DROs) and can also assist with bankruptcy proceedings.

Over the year our telephone advice line provided help to over 1,100 residents. We provided weekly sessions of one to one appointments at both the Manor Gardens Centre in Holloway and the St Luke's Community Centre in the south of the borough.

During 2018-2019 a total of 2,810 people received support. All too often we found they had both welfare benefits and debt issues that needed urgent attention with many at risk of homelessness and destitution.

A key part of the Service is representation at welfare benefits appeals and tribunals. The complexity of the system and the challenges associated with the tribunal process means that it is very difficult for people to get a fair hearing without such support.

It remains the case that the earlier a welfare benefits or debt issue can be addressed the better and our advice services are made as accessible as possible through five community outreach venues. This currently includes regular weekly sessions at four community mental health venues and a drug and alcohol service.



Funded by

Islington Direct is a partnership project with Islington Law Centre (ILC). A successful bid to the National Lottery Community Fund’s Partnership Programme means that IPR has secured three years of new funding to take forward this project. Complementing our Core Service, Islington Direct will provide effective and holistic advice services addressing debt problems, maximising incomes from welfare benefits, supporting individuals around homelessness and housing, and tackling immigration issues.

The recent Windrush Scandal has highlighted some of the challenges some UK residents face. Even residents who are able to get their status resolved can encounter real barriers and delays in getting the essential income they are entitled to.

This initiative will provide the capacity to work with the most vulnerable residents in the borough. Islington Direct will address the key challenges faced by people living in poverty by delivering tailored and specialist advice. It will assist those with complex issues which cut across different areas of need and will maximise the impact across the two organisations.

Case Study

Mr P is a disabled resident and a foreign national. Whilst entitled to disability benefits, he was initially turned down due to issues, in relation to his immigration status. Whilst his case was being dealt with, he received no benefits, and went into debt, including rent arrears, and was at risk of homelessness. IPR was able to successfully challenge the decision, which enabled him to regularise his status. He was then able to receive all the benefits he was entitled to, including backdating, which enabled him to clear most of his debts.

“I’m certain that without IPR I would have been destitute. The thought of having to survive on the streets was almost overwhelming. They are a lifeline!”



Evening Legal Advice Sessions

Thank you once again to law firm CMS who have enabled us to deliver another year of free evening legal advice sessions at the St Luke’s Community Centre, with input from the BPP Law School. CMS are a great partner and supporter of IPR and over 2018-2019 hundreds of people received help through the Evening Legal Advice Sessions.



Islington Water Debt Advice Project

In 2018 UK water companies were owed £2.2bn by consumers falling behind with their bills, while electricity and gas providers were owed a further £1.1bn. Household bill problems often have a serious impact on mental health and people all too often turn to loan sharks to keep the lights on.

IPR secured a two-year grant from the Thames Water Trust Fund for the Islington Water Debt Advice Project in 2018. The focus is on those with water debts, but the service can assist with other debts as well.

There are various schemes that can help with water debts such as the Thames Water Customer Assistance Fund, the WaterSure Scheme and the Water Direct Scheme. The project includes giving residents budgeting skills so that they can budget more effectively.

This built on the Financial Skills for Life project that was funded by the NatWest Skills and Opportunities Fund. This provided financial education targeted at vulnerable individuals, and helped them improve their long term money management skills, confidence and also to clear their debts.



Funded by

Thames Water Trust Fund

Case Study

"I definitely didn't think we would go from being a settled family with both of us working and two happy kids to queuing up at the food bank twice a week.

That all happened in the space of a year after I was diagnosed with MS. The marriage broke up and I lost my job. Before I knew where I was I was deep in debt and the bills were coming in thick and fast. I made the mistake of taking out a 'payday' loan and things really spiralled after that.



The Council told me about IPR and their caseworker was brilliant. She not only helped me tackle my debts, but told me all about the benefits I should be entitled to. I applied for them, but was initially turned down. I appealed and was supported throughout the process, including the tribunal, and we won the case. The debts are now being paid off and I don't fear the postman any more!"

Pat is 42 and can face the future again

There are increasing numbers of people living in poverty in Islington. Inequality is on the rise and the borough is becoming more acutely divided between the haves and the have-nots. Islington has the second highest levels of child poverty in London. We know that part of this is related to the benefits system. When people have their benefits cancelled, or delayed, with so many living on the breadline, the smallest change in circumstances can leave people with no money at all.

Thanks to a three-year grant secured from the City Bridge Trust, IPR Assist is building on IPR's experience of delivering advice services over many years. We work with key local partners, notably Help On Your Doorstep (HOYD) to identify those residents most affected by poverty and most in need of support.

Weekly referrals are booked in for appointments at our offices at the Manor Gardens Centre, particularly those requiring specialist welfare benefits advice, casework and representation. Whilst it is early days in terms of project delivery the majority of those being referred have disabilities, and problems accessing their full entitlement of benefits.

Funded by

City Bridge Trust
The City of London Corporation's Charity



IPR Assist has built on the success of the Access+ project, which was funded for three years by Trust for London. It worked with key Black Asian Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) organisations based in Islington. These were the Arab Advice Bureau, Eritrean Community in the United Kingdom (ECUK), Islington Chinese Association, Islington Somali Community, and Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS).

Access+ ran until October 2018 and helped over a thousand people with welfare benefits and debt problems from the BAMER communities. It proved a very successful model for the way in which an organisation such as IPR can extend its impact. Referrals from key partner BAMER organisations still take place, but are now supported through IPR Assist.

IPR Focus is a project providing specialist support to people with multiple disabilities. The application process for benefits such as the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is very challenging for people with disabilities, including those with learning difficulties.

Claimants have described the assessment procedure “a hostile environment”. Those dealing with the claims often have little or no expertise in the medical condition or disability being assessed, leading to hundreds of thousands of successful appeals nationally.

IPR’s experience is that many disabled people with clear needs are refused only to have their benefits reinstated on appeal. This is not only stressful for those directly affected it is a waste of resources. A recent report showed that disabled people are £1,200 a year on average worse off on benefits since 2008 while non-disabled claimants have lost on average £300 per year.

IPR Focus provides help with everything from filling in the application forms to tribunal representation if needed and helps hundreds of individuals and families each year in Islington.

Funded by



Three Oaks Trust

Thanks to funding from the Allen & Overy Foundation and the London Legal Support Trust, IPR currently provides a bespoke service for carers, in conjunction with the Islington Carers Hub. Carer’s Allowance is critical for those caring full-time and unpaid for older or disabled loved ones. Many people provide care for loved ones at great financial and personal cost and all too often end up in financial hardship.

- ✱ Every day another 6,000 people take on a caring responsibility – 2 million each year
- ✱ 58% of carers are women and 42% are men
- ✱ 1.3 million people provide over 50 hours of care per week
- ✱ In 2019 there are over 8.8 million adult carers in the UK
- ✱ Carers save the economy £132 billion per year, an average of £19,336 per carer

IPR Care has high levels of demand in part because of the constant welfare reforms. As with all of our services we advocate on behalf of clients and provide the essential support they need. Most older carers have long-term health problems or a disability themselves. Many miss out on Carer’s Allowance for years because they do not realise they are entitled to it by which time they can have large unmanageable debts.



Accounts Summary for the year ended 31st March 2019

	Total Funds 2019 £	Total Funds 2018 £
Incoming resources		
Voluntary income	2,091	2,161
Investment income	150	153
Incoming resources from charitable activities	469,807	410,337
Total incoming resources	472,048	412,651
Resources expended		
Cost of generating funds	7,755	8,507
Charitable activities	440,593	400,210
Total resources expended	448,348	408,717
Net income/(expenditure)	23,700	3,934
Reconciliation of funds		
Total funds brought forward	146,433	142,499
Total funds carried forward	170,133	146,433
Funds of the charity		
Designated funds	46,500	22,500
Unrestricted funds	123,633	123,933

Copies of the full audited accounts for 2018-2019 are available on the Charity Commission website or from IPR

Chief Executive Gerard Omasta-Milsom

Business Manager Paul Harper

Specialist Caseworkers

Fereshteh Panah Derek Jackson
John Spriggs Fisseha Habte-Mariam
Gloria Hill Michael Nwosu

Locum Caseworkers

Susana Arposio Nicola Duncan
Dee Morson Paul Wallis
Sebastian Lettouche

IPR@50 Project Manager Sarah Turner

Administrator Jagruti Depala

Trustees

Henrietta Cooke (Acting Chair & Treasurer)
David Moore (Vice Chair)
Joanna Givens Krishan Murari
Arthur Ryser Toyosi Akinfemiwa
Bahar Choudhary Martin Collins
Wande Showunmi Saiqa Pandor

Matt Brown (until May 2019)

IT Support

RJ Partners

Website Support

Bootleweb

Fundraising Support

Mike Butler, Pilot

Tim Clark

Organisations giving invaluable support to IPR during the year

Allen & Overy Foundation
Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust
City Bridge Trust
Cloudesley
CMS
DWP Access to Work
Islington Clinical Commissioning Group
Islington Council
LawWorks
London Legal Support Trust
NatWest Skills and Opportunities Fund
Persula Foundation
Santander Foundation
Souter Charitable Trust
Thames Water Trust Fund
The Henry Smith Charity
The Inman Charity
The Margins Project
The Morris Charitable Trust
The National Lottery Community Fund
Three Oaks Trust
Trust for London

Thank you

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 regular outreach sessions at mental health, and drug and alcohol services in Islington. If you are currently being supported by one of the services below, you can book an appointment through your allocated clinician or key worker. Most sessions are weekly, booked up to 2 weeks in advance.

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 N7 6JS

Drug and Alcohol Services – appointment via centre

- ❁ Better Lives, 99-101 Seven Sisters Road N7 7QP

Legal Advice Evening Session - appointment via centre

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



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Charity registration no. 1077688
Company registered in England no. 01753440

