



# St Pauls Advice Centre

Advice and information for the people of St Pauls and east Bristol

**Annual Review 2010-11**

# A bit about what we do

**Most of us will encounter, at some point in our lives, a moment when we need a helping hand. This can come through illness, or redundancy, or relationship breakdown, or sudden disablement, or retirement.**

It might be caused by crime or injustice, or having to flee civil war and make a new life in a new place. It might simply be discovering how complicated the benefit system is and needing some expert guidance to find a way through it.

These are the times when skilled and independent advice can help. Advisers at St Pauls

Advice Centre (SPAC) support people to get control over their debts, to straighten out benefit difficulties, correct mistaken judgements, rescue homes from repossession and regularise immigration status.

Sometimes a phone call is all that's needed; at others, extensive work with individuals and families over a period of time. Our practical support helps people to gather up the threads of their lives and move on again.

We inform people of their rights and obligations, and of services available to them – helping them to secure their rights.

# Achievements in 2010-11

**Secured funding for continued advice services** across east Bristol, in partnership with East Bristol Advice Services and Bristol City Council.

**Collaborative work with other agencies** succeeded in bringing over £700,000 per year into Bristol from the Legal Services Commission for supporting advice needs.

**Established future funding** to expand home visits and outreach services in a local health centre, following completion of a three year Big Lottery funded project.

**Continued to be at the forefront of bilingual advice** with our Somali Advice Project for Bristol's new Somali communities.

**Face-to-face debt advice helped people gain control** and manage their debts in a climate of financial insecurity.

**Information, help completing forms and referrals** were given to more than 1000 people by our reception staff.

**Need for face-to-face support can only grow in the next few years. SPAC will continue to argue for high quality, free advice for all, and to develop new and innovative ways to deliver it.**

# Amina's story

**Amina suffered from severe mental health problems: panic attacks; depression; memory loss; suicide attempts, by overdose & hanging; self-harm, by cutting herself & banging her head against walls.**

She came to us because her home was at risk due to rent arrears and her case was due to be heard at court.

Our debt adviser was able to avoid repossession by securing an adjournment at court. Our benefits adviser identified long standing problems with Housing Benefit that had caused rent arrears.

We discovered gaps in Amina's entitlement and that benefit had been suspended. We negotiated on her behalf and helped to lodge an appeal.

As a result Amina was paid Housing Benefit that she should have received previously. This sum cleared her rent arrears and put a stop to further possession proceedings, providing the security she needed.

We also assisted Amina to claim Disability Living Allowance. When awarded, her income increased by over £93 per week which helped her to receive the care and improved living conditions that she so badly needed.

# The year in numbers

**97%** 97% of clients would recommend our service to others.

**£1.3m** We helped several hundred people manage £1.3m worth of debt.

**£500,000** Our advice brought more than half a million pounds into the community.

**83%** About 83% of the people using our services are from black and ethnic minority communities.

**2,282** We dealt with 2,282 enquiries during the year.

**72%** 72% of people we advised said that our help had improved their situation.

**£294,105** Our annual turnover for 2010/11 was £294,105.

Please turn to the back page for a list of our funders for the year.

# St Pauls Advice Centre

146 Grosvenor Road  
St Pauls, Bristol BS2 8YA  
0117 955 2981  
enquiry@stpaulsAdvice.org.uk

Reg. Charity No: 1083010  
Ltd Co. 03920535  
OISC Reg. No. N20040032

## Rydel McLaughlin

2 July 1931 – 27 Nov 2010

Mr Mac was a founding member of SPAC in the early 1970s, working hard to make the building usable. He was a loyal management committee member to the end of his life, always dedicated to community advice services for the people of St Pauls. He is widely and sadly missed.



## With thanks

To all our staff for their good cheer and dedication to their work in the face of constant uncertainty about the future;

To all who give their time to being trustees, with thanks and farewell to Tim Roberts who moved on after 10 years on the committee;

To other advice providers in Bristol for their collaboration and finally, to our funders.

## Our funders



Community  
Legal Service



Design: Kelly Paterson kelly\_p@me.com 0117 9021051  
Printed on FSC certified paper.



St Pauls Advice Centre services are free, independent and impartial, serving communities throughout east Bristol and St Pauls

Contact us on 0117 955 2981 or visit [advicewest.org.uk](http://advicewest.org.uk)

### 1. St Pauls Advice Centre

146 Grosvenor Road, St Pauls, Bristol BS2 8YA

- Appointments
- Drop-in sessions
- Home visits
- General and benefits advice



Contact us for more information.

Bus routes 5, 25

### 2. Montpelier Health Centre

Bath Buildings, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5PT

- Drop-in sessions
- General & welfare benefits advice

Arrive early as places limited – contact us for more information.



Bus routes Gloucester Rd: 70, 73, 75, 76, 18

### 3. Somali Advice Project

Malcolm X Community Centre  
141 City Road, St Pauls, Bristol BS2 8YH

- Appointments
- Drop-in sessions
- Home visits
- General advice in Somali

Contact us for more information.

Bus routes 5, 25



### 4. Wellspring Healthy Living Centre

Beam Street, Barton Hill, Bristol BS5 9QY

- Appointment only
- General & welfare benefits advice

Contact us for more information.

Bus routes 36 or Church Rd: 6, 7, 41, 43, 44, 45



### 5. Easton Community Centre

Kilburn Street, Easton, BS5 6AW

- Drop-in sessions
- General, benefits & debt advice
- Urdu and Punjabi spoken

Arrive early as places limited – contact us for more information.

Bus routes 506 or Whitehall Road: 6, 7



### 6. Beacon Centre

City Academy, Russell Town Ave. Bristol BS5 9JH

- Drop-in sessions
- General advice in Somali

Arrive early as places limited – contact us for more information.

Bus routes 6, 7 or Church Rd: 41, 43, 44, 45



### 7. The Old Bank

108 Church Road, Redfield, BS5 9LJ

- Appointment only
- General, benefits & debt advice
- Urdu, Punjabi & Somali spoken

Contact us for more information.

Bus routes 41, 43, 44, 45



## Abdullahi's story

In 2001 Abdullahi's home in Somalia was attacked by militia. His father was killed, his sister was raped, and Abdullahi was beaten with guns. He escaped Somalia as he believed he would be killed.

Abdullahi sought asylum in the UK. He moved around the country using vouchers to pay for food. His asylum claim was refused and any form of support was withdrawn.

In 2003 Abdullahi moved to Bristol, married and subsequently had two children. We helped the family to claim what benefits they could, but because of Abdullahi's immigration status he was not entitled to benefit in his own right. Therefore the family were struggling on a very low income.

We referred him for specialist immigration advice and indefinite leave to remain in the UK was finally granted in 2009.

In 2011 we helped him apply for British citizenship and he now has a British Passport.

Abdullahi says he felt like a prisoner as he knew he could not travel even if he had the money to do so. After 10 years he now feels secure. He can work, make more of his life, and travel knowing that he can return safely to Britain.

