



St Pauls Advice Centre

Annual Review 2011-12

years

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

40 years in our community

Welcome to St Pauls Advice Centre's 40th Annual Review, where we're hoping it's true that life begins at 40. So far, we seem to be weathering our mid-life crisis pretty well.

This year we consolidated our expansion into delivery of advice services in east Bristol. Two members of staff and two trustees from East Bristol Advice Service joined our staff team and management committee, expanding our range of skills and experience.

The most visible outcome is our provision of many more outreach sessions in various community venues, in a greater number of languages, making advice more accessible and closer to home.

However, this was also the year when it became clearer how deep and wide the cuts would be. With some re-deployment and reorganising, we have been able to retain all our staff and continue delivering advice to high levels and quality. We began the process of developing a five year Strategic Plan, which will help to guide us through the difficulties ahead.

One of Bristol's great assets is a well-developed and collaborative advice sector. We look forward to continuing to work within that network, informing and supporting people in securing their rights and the services they are entitled to.

Achievements in 2011-12

Established new outreach services in East Bristol helping over 600 people

Expanded services based at local health centres, which have dealt with 363 advice enquiries

Secured future funding from Lloyds TSB Foundation to continue our bilingual Somali advice service

Restructured our organisation establishing two Advice Supervisor posts

Improved monitoring procedures to better reflect the work we do

Contributed to the Government's national review of advice services

Involved in local and national campaigns opposing cuts to Legal Aid

Integrated East Bristol Advice Service staff and trustees into the advice centre team

Worked in partnership with other advice agencies to ensure the continuation of essential Face to Face Debt Advice services throughout Bristol

Halima's story

Halima had received a letter from Bristol City Council regarding substantial Council Tax debt and rent arrears.

On investigation we discovered that this was due to the sudden removal of her council tax single occupancy discount covering several years. The council had checked records of credit reference agencies and the electoral role as part of a city wide review, and concluded that her son was living at her address.

However, Halima told us that her son had not lived there since he left home to go to college several years ago. He had no secure address and stayed with friends or slept in his camper van whilst he moved around looking for work.

Halima allowed her son to use her address as a postal address and to keep him on the electoral register, as she did not want him to lose the right to vote. We helped her gather evidence that her son was living elsewhere and assisted her appeal against the council's decision.

Halima's appeal was successful, 80% of her discount was reinstated and arrears greatly reduced. We are now helping her appeal to the Valuation Tribunal to reinstate the final 20% discount so that her future will be debt free.

The year in numbers

£1.1m Financial gain we have brought into the community by helping households increase their income

3,424 The total number of enquiries we dealt with

£800,000 The total value of debt we have helped nearly 600 local people to manage

80% Number of people using our services who are from black and ethnic minority communities

1300 Number of people helped by our reception service; providing information, helping to complete forms and signposting

41% Number of people using our services who describe themselves as disabled or long term sick

£329,480 The cost of delivering our services to the community during 2011/12

99% 99% of our clients would recommend our service to others

What we do

St Pauls Advice Centre provides legal advice services to people experiencing problems with benefits, debt, immigration, housing, employment and consumer issues.

We are a community-based service, with our main office located in the heart of St Pauls. We serve some of Bristol's most vibrant but disadvantaged communities, delivering drop-in and appointment based advice sessions in various locations across Ashley and east Bristol. Our services are free, independent and impartial.

Main office

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

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, for their help in maintaining proper governance and their contribution towards shaping our future;

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 07714 020 184
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 www.advicewest.org.uk/service/st-pauls-advice-centre

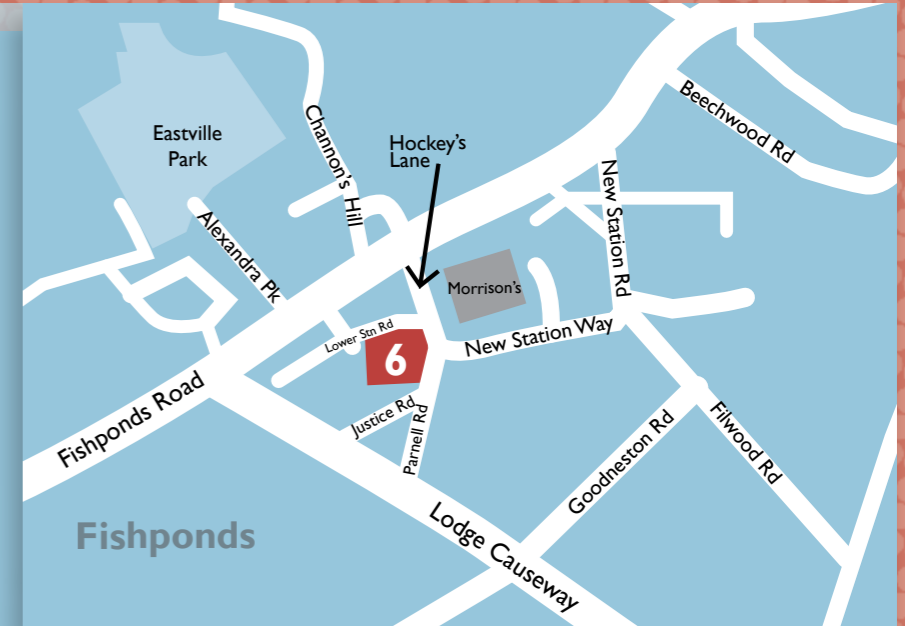
1. St Pauls Advice Centre

146 Grosvenor Road, St Pauls, Bristol BS2 8YA

- **Appointments**
- **Drop-in sessions**
- **Home visits**
- **General, debt 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. Wellspring Healthy Living Centre

Beam Street, Barton Hill, Bristol BS5 9QY

- **Appointments**
- **Drop-in sessions**
- **General & welfare benefits advice**
- **Somali spoken**

Contact us for more information.

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



4. 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



5. 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



6. Fishponds Customer Service Point

Robinson House, Hockleys Lane, Fishponds, BS16 3HL

- **Drop-in sessions**
- **Debt advice only**

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

Bus routes 5, 48, 49, 342, 507, 581, 689 and U3



Joyce's story

Joyce is 55, suffers from depression, alcohol dependency and is recovering from a recent stroke.

Joyce told us that her Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) was stopped because she had been reassessed as fit for work. We assisted Joyce to appeal but the tribunal who heard her case did not decide in her favour.

The adviser studied the decision and appealed to the Upper Tribunal because the original tribunal failed to properly take into account that when Joyce completed her ESA renewal form, she was very unwell as she had just had a stroke and had no one to help her. Because of this, the form had been completed very poorly and in very little detail.

The Upper Tribunal agreed and ordered that a new tribunal reheard her case. With strong evidence from her doctor and help from our adviser, her case was finally successful. **Joyce's ESA was reinstated and she was paid £1800 in arrears.**