



NLAH Annual Report 2009



Chair's Report

The past year at NLAH has seen as ever new developments and progression of the charity as a whole.

The major event this year was our move from Bourverie road to St Paul's Church in January. We are extremely grateful for the warm welcome and support we have received from Niall Weir. Happily, many of our regular clients and volunteers accompanied us in this move and we have welcomed many new clients and volunteers.

We were very pleased to recruit Richard Stuttle as our new chef in July, as well as cooking delicious food, he brings an enjoyable and enthusiastic atmosphere in the kitchen and amongst the volunteers.

I would like to thank the many supporters and volunteers of NLAH, without whom we could not provide such a warm, welcoming service. We are grateful to all who support NLAH and look forward to continuing to receive their support in the future.

Finally, I would like to write a personal thank you to everyone at NLAH. It is with great regret that I have to stand down as chair and volunteer at NLAH after 6 years. It has been a great pleasure working for such a friendly and welcoming charity and I've had had a fantastic time. I leave with some wonderful, cherished memories and I will endeavour to stay in touch.

Selena Harris
(Chair)

Early morning outreach

This year a group of volunteers from NLAH have begun some early morning outreach on Saturday mornings. We take tea and coffee and visit the places where we know people are sleeping rough. We make sure that they are aware of NLAH and the other places where they can go to get more help. We also make referrals to other outreach services. Hackney has never had very high numbers of visible rough sleepers as most people sleep in derelict buildings, squats or other out of the way places. This year however there appears to have been a growing number of rough sleepers in the borough. Much of this is around the southern borders with the City where a much tougher approach has displaced a number of homeless people into Shoreditch. Larger groups of destitute Eastern Europeans in Clapton and Stamford Hill have also added to the numbers.

The chef cooking a meal



“to be honest, nlah saved my life” service user

Manager's Report

NLAH has gone through a big change over the last year in that we moved from Bouverie Road to a new venue at St Paul's Church in January, however many of our regular clients followed us and there are also a lot of new faces attending from our area a little bit further east in Hackney. We have received a tremendous welcome from Niall Weir the minister at St Paul's and have been made to feel very much at home.

The number of clients attending was down from an average of about 60 to an average of 30 initially but we are now seeing numbers attending of up to 75 people per session. The hall is big, bright and cheerfully decorated and the atmosphere at the sessions continues to be relaxed and friendly. We also have a new chef, Richard Stuttle, who started working with us in July. He continues to create delicious three course meals twice a week and the clients and volunteers all agree that the food is tasty, nutritious and varied.

There are still many outside agencies attending our sessions – the Hackney Drug and Alcohol Outreach Team, Social Action for Health (A health promotion team from the NHS trust) the TB outreach team based at the Homerton hospital, and a health visitor

are all regular visitors to us and we welcome them as they are all tremendously useful to our clients. We are also very grateful to the various local businesses that donate food to us – particularly the Spence Bakery, Wholefoods organic supermarket and Growing Communities, the local organic fruit and vegetable scheme.

Our most recent survey, carried out in August, told us that our clientele are 72% male, 75% from Hackney, 85% unemployed and 60% aged between 41 and 60. 45% described themselves as having a long term disability and 22% said they were rough sleeping. 36% identified themselves as Polish. The full details of this survey are available on request.

Finally, it can never be overstated that we could not operate at all if it were not for the volunteers that come in and help cook, serve, clean and generally help the organisation to function. They work for no financial gain in their own free time, they are cheerful and hard working, they are an essential part of the team and we are very grateful to them.

Mike Tomes
Manager



Volunteers from Hackney Community College

Advice Worker's Report

With its advice service working as an integral part of the drop-in NLAH continues to offer accessible advice to many marginalised people who probably would not seek advice elsewhere but find it easy to do so in the welcoming environment where they come for a meal. The major event this year, both for the advice service and for the drop-in as a whole, has been our move to new premises at St Paul's Church Hall. A good deal of thought and planning went into the move which although regarded with apprehension was carried out successfully. The advice service now operates out of a pleasant, light, roomy space with a large cupboard to pack everything away at the end of the session so that the space is available to other groups. We have been made very welcome by Niall Weir and all at the church and this has happily allowed the advice service to continue its work with minimal disruption.

The need for advice continues unabated. The advice service has a good record in enabling clients to receive the benefits or tax credits to which they are entitled. The underlying reasons why people need help from an advice worker with these problems are in my opinion the complicated nature of the benefits and tax credits systems which require specialist knowledge to negotiate, a high level of official error and maladministration (at least in the cases I encounter, which are not necessarily representative) and reluctance or lack of confidence on the part of clients in dealing with officialdom. This underlines the usefulness of our informal and accessible advice service where clients can have a meal at the drop-in then use the advice service without an appointment, in an environment that they do not find off-putting or intimidating, in the knowledge that I can explain their entitlement to them and then advocate on their behalf by telephone or in writing.

The difficulties faced by single homeless people in accessing accommodation do not appear to me to be diminishing. I was hopeful that the introduction of local housing allowance, a type of housing benefit for private rented accommodation that is linked to actual market rents, would allow more homeless people whom the council do not have a duty to house to obtain accommodation. Unfortunately the reality is that lack of the requisite deposit, often amounting to several hundred pounds or more, is a barrier to many people. Until there is a rent deposit scheme in Hackney that is made widely available to single homeless people and childless couples I cannot see this situation changing. We work closely with the excellent Thamesreach Street Rescue Team who provide a quick route into hostels for verified rough sleepers but the 'hidden homeless' (i.e. homeless people who are moving from friend to friend, who for various reasons cannot get a hostel place or do not want to go into a hostel and just want their own space with support provided by floating support workers where support is needed) continue to face enormous obstacles in accessing accommodation.

The advice service is also used by many clients who are not homeless and we are able to assist them in numerous ways to successfully maintain their tenancies or simply to make their lives run more smoothly. Some examples of work done include explaining official correspondence to clients, helping them fill in forms or advocating on their behalf with landlords in disrepair cases.

It is apparent that accessible, face to face advice (for example as opposed to telephone advice or an appointment based system) is essential for many of our clients and we look forward to continuing to offer this service.

Helen Martyn

Advice Worker, August 2009

"The staff and volunteers are all very respectful and kind" service user

Work with Eastern European guests

During this year we have received the first half of a two year grant from City Parochial towards the work we have been doing in supporting our Eastern European service users. On Wednesday evenings Dorota has been providing basic English classes combined with some practical advice and support. We have also been very pleased to have had the support of a number of Polish speaking volunteers including Ursula and Lukas. Visitors from Poland and other Eastern European countries continue to make up to half of the regular service users attending the drop-in sessions.

Homeless Eastern European people face particular hardships as unless they have been able to register on the Workers Registration Scheme and pay their national insurance contributions for a full year they are ineligible for most benefits if they become unemployed.

Theoretically they are supposed to return to their home countries if this occurs and many have done that. There are others however who are still keen to make a go of living in London and they struggle to find accommodation and new employment. A small number of these have developed alcohol problems and are living on the streets. Tragically a number of our service users have died this year. We are very concerned to do all we can to prevent this and offer as much practical and emotional support as we can. As with all our guests we offer a healthy nutritious meal, washing facilities and a clothing store which are much appreciated. Alongside this we offer advice, encouragement and support for those in the grip of alcoholism and depression – referring on to other agencies or health services wherever possible.



Roger and Kevin - happy volunteers



Florence, a volunteer from a local sixth form college, making a lovely jammy cake

*“ I love coming to NLAH because it gives me
the chance to meet friends and socialise ”* service user

Trustee Report: 2008/9

Trustees:

- **Hannah Rought-Brooks**
(resigned as Chair October 2008)
- **Selena Harris** (Chair from October 2008)
- **Mark Palframan** (Vice Chair)
- **Florian Maehler** (Treasurer)
- **Anne Goldstein** (Joint Secretary)
- **Rachel Neill** (Joint Secretary)
- **Jonathan Clarke**

Throughout the year NLAH has continued to provide services for homeless and vulnerable people at two weekly drop-in sessions. Between 50 and 100 people attend these sessions and benefit from practical support including a free three course meal, a clothing store and washing facilities. A team of volunteers under the direction of the centre manger ensure that service users are given a warm welcome and the opportunity for social interaction. More formal advice is provided by the Welfare Rights worker. 28% of the service users said that they were rough sleeping and 60% said that they had a problem with drugs or alcohol. (Figures from the July 2008 survey) NLAH is in contact with a lot of people who established outreach services can find hard to reach and consequently we have been able to provide some of these services with the opportunity to visit our drop-in sessions on a regular basis to make contact with these clients. Visiting services during this year have included the Hackney Drug and Alcohol outreach team, the TB nursing team and Thamesreach Street Rescue contacting and referring rough sleepers into accommodation.

Unfortunately NLAH was asked to leave the premises at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Bouverie Road from which we had been operating for about seven years. We closed the service at Christmas 2007 and reopened a few weeks later at our new premises in the hall at St Pauls church on Stoke Newington Road. This also required a change in the opening times – moving from Thursday to Wednesday evenings and from Tuesday to Monday lunchtimes. Despite our publicity (in various languages!) these changes caused an initial drop in the numbers of service users but by the end of the year the centre was as busy as ever. There were no staff changes during the year with Mike Tomes remaining as part time Centre Manager, Helen Martyn as part time Welfare Rights worker and Mario Pesenti as part time cook.

The Annual General Meeting was held in the hall at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on 15 October and included an interesting talk from Liz Davies a Barrister specialising in homelessness.

The board of Trustees were very sorry to lose Hannah as the Chair when she resigned and left London to work abroad in October 2007. Selena Harris, a long term volunteer at NLAH, was elected as Chair to replace her at the AGM which she admirably combined with her final year's studies as a medical student.

The management committee meetings have been held, on average, every six weeks and are open to volunteers and other people connected with the work. In practice the trustees have been joined at these meetings by Mike and Helen from the staff as well as other long term committee members including Tom Rubens and Bill Rashleigh and our two service user representatives Grant and Tony. Since the move to St Pauls we have been very grateful for the free use of a room in the vicarage there for these meetings.

Continuing a policy of securing our funding from as broad a base as possible NLAH has been pleased to receive funding from a number of charitable trusts, statutory sources and the local community. The biggest single source of income was the first half of a two year grant from the City Parochial Fund for the services provided for destitute Eastern European clients. In recognition of the fact that these clients can make up to half the number of the users of the service generally this grant also contributed up to half of the running costs for those parts of the service for which we had not been able to secure funding.

We were pleased to once again receive a grant from the London Borough of Hackney towards the costs of the Welfare Rights Service. As with the previous year this only came to £11,000 as it was only a proportion of the total costs of the service in reflection of the proportion of service users who were identified as being from Hackney.

The move to new premises at St Pauls Church unfortunately brought with it a previously unexpected rise in the cost of the rent. We hadn't budgeted for this but fortunately we were able to apply for and begin receiving a grant for three years from the West Hackney Parochial Charity to cover the rent which works out at £13,000 per year.

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Service User Representative's Report

We also received a number of smaller grants including £2,000 from the Yapp Charitable Trust and £1,000 from the Stoke Newington Relief Fund. This latter fund is for the relief of poverty in a designated area – roughly corresponding to the old parish of Stoke Newington – and we qualified for this as we assist a number of individual service users who live in that area.

Community fundraising has continued to be an important area of work for NLAH and included running a stall at the Stoke Fest in Clissold Park in the summer of 2007 and two collections from carol singing in the local area in December. Support from local businesses, pubs and schools has also been much appreciated as well as individual donations and committed giving.

Careful financial management ensured that we spent within our budget leaving us in a robust financial position to face the challenges ahead for 2009-10.

Mark Palframan (for the Trustees)



A self portrait by one of our clients.

A Sense of Community?

That's one of those ubiquitous phrases that mean something and nothing, a vacuous cliché. I think/hope most of us would acknowledge that the folk who come to N.L.A.H. for food and advice are perhaps not from environments that are the most solid and organized? So another element of what people can take from N.L.A.H. is some kind of loose, tacit support network. Part of what I want to say is, as users we come to know each other slowly, piece by piece and grow to love and care. Alright it's not always peace, love and understanding but we share stories about ourselves, our worries and the day-to-day bits and pieces.

And then there are these volunteers! Who on earth are they? Why, how do they find the time and effort to wait on people hand and foot? (You see, I've never waited on people for less than six quid an hour) And these people do it out of the goodness of their hearts!

I think small pieces of personal stuff trickle through, in both directions. A number of eaters make sure they pop in to say hello (and eat Richard's food!) and check in with their personal favourite volunteer. I know for a fact there are volunteers who seek out their personal contacts among users with whom they've formed a bond over time.

These ingredients I think do make a community. If what I say holds some truth, it will have been borne out recently by us moving, because if indeed we are collectively a community, most of us will still be here at N.L.A.H., at our new home – thank you again to St. Paul's. Now to my mind these at-times tenuous connections are what make up a community.

Another thing I want to say is that I'm optimistic that these things are going to carry on. So please everyone let's keep on and good wishes to our restart in a new place, but not very far away.

Treasurer's Report

The year which ended 31st March 2009 was again a period of financial stability for NLAH.

At the year end we had net assets of £28,282 (2008, £16,466).

NLAH assets are primarily cash as in previous years. Our liabilities are also relatively simple: an accrued PAYE creditor for payments due to HM Revenue & Customs in April and payment of suppliers incurred at the end of March 2008.

NLAH's total income for 2008/9 was £57,415 (£41,302 2007/08), a 28% increase on the former financial year. This is a very encouraging development considering NLAH closed the previous financial year on a deficit of £5356 and important funding cycles had also come to a conclusion. The increase in income is evidence of the Trustees' successful fundraising strategy which targets grants and donors working in the homelessness sector. New donors supporting NLAH work are the City Parochial Fund, the Dion Fund and the West Hackney Parochial Charity. Total expenditure amounted to £45,599 (2007/0 £45,599) a small increase of 2.3 %.

In the past two years NLAH has seen increases in its expenditure and it is predicted that expenditure will increase even further in the next financial year. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly the increased rent costs associated with NLAH's move to new premises that provide superior facilities for its clients; and secondly NLAH's commitment to extended service delivery especially in regards to its Polish clients. NLAH has received special funding from the City Parochial Fund for this work.

The main expenditure items for 2008/09 were:

- Total Salary Costs for Year Ending March 2009 was £28,963
- Expenditure in regards to Food and Supplies was £6,544. This was up by £2,364 compared to previous year which can be attributed to an increase in general food costs, purchase of kitchen equipment and the sourcing of fresh quality products on a more regular basis
- Rent was another main expenditure item. NLAH moved to new premises at the end of 2008. The premises offers a friendlier, brighter and cleaner environment for NLAH service users. It is, however, significantly more expensive than NLAH's previous facility

For more detail picture of NLAH costs please refer to the income and expenditure table.

As in previous years most of NLAH's income

derived from grants. Some of the biggest grants we received were:

Grant with London Councils (Hackney) continued and NLAH received £11,000 towards its Advice Service provided during drop in sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays. In addition the Embassy of Ireland and CPF gave £1,596 and £5,200 respectively.

The City Parochial Fund awarded NLAH a grant of £24,000 for 2008/09. NLAH is extremely grateful for the support of CPF as it funds a wide spectrum of the services. Funding in regards to A8 clients is very important as the gap between satisfying clients needs and available funding is very significant.

The Embassy of Ireland (Dion Fund) contributed to NLAH's work with a grant of £5,804. Again this is very significant for NLAH as the Dion fund agreed to fund various cost centres which in turn contributed to well coordinated and efficient client services.

Streetsmart awarded NLAH £6,000 for its work, an increase of £1,000 which we are very grateful for.

The Yapp Charitable Trust granted NLAH £2,000. As in previous years the funds will support the cost of managing and developing NLAH services, a contribution that is essential and ensures quality support and service to clients.

NLAH is also extremely grateful for a donation by the Slaughter and May Trust of £2,500 which we have been allocated to various programme deficits.

As in previous years there have been a number of smaller grants. Most notably these were Hackney Community College, Stoke Newington Relief in Need Fund, Coutts Charitable Trust. NLAH is very grateful to all of these organisations as well as members of the local community who have continued to give generously and on a regular basis. It is through the generosity of NLAH's supporters that such a small organisation is able to provide such a high quality service to its clients.

NLAH would also like to express its gratitude to the various local businesses who have provided ongoing support throughout the year with food items and supplies. These donations in kind are critical to ensuring that NLAH is able to provide its services more cost effectively.

NLAH is also extremely grateful to its volunteers who provide continued help and support. They are an integral part of NLAH's services and without them NLAH's work would not be possible, considering NLAH had only three part time staff.

NLAH accounts Summary 2007/08

Statement of financial activities For the year ended 31 March 2009

	2009	2008
Incoming resources		
Grants	55,184	34,300
Donations	3,425	6,584
Fundraising activities (party)	0	0
Bank interest	258	425
Total incoming resources	58,866	41,309

Resources expended

Fundraising/publicity	210	0
Food and supplies	6,544	4,180
Salary costs	28,963	33,747
Recruitment and training	304	386
Rent	6,390	2,520
Subscriptions	238	139
Insurance and professional		
Membership	609	1,509
Telephone	274	330
Printing, postage and		
stationery	237	487
Depreciation	134	188
Independent examiner's fees	625	500
Volunteer expenses	80	846
Rubbish collection	886	1,001
Sundry expenses	105	832
Total resources expended	45,599	46,665

Net movement in funds	13,267	(5,356)
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Total funds brought forward	16,466	21,822
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Total funds carried forward	29,733	16,466
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The trustees confirm that the accounts on these pages are a summary of the information contained in the full annual accounts, approved at the AGM on 15th October 2009. The summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information the full annual accounts should be consulted. Copies of these, upon which the Independent Examiner has reported without qualification, have been delivered to the Charity Commission and are available on request from NLAH, Church Hall, 24-30 Bouverie Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 0AJ

By order of the board, 15th October 2009

Florian Maelher

Statement of financial activities For the year ended 31 March 2009

	2009	2008
Tangible fixed assets	134	267
Current assets		
Debtors and prepayments	450	450
Cash at bank and in hand	43,320	21,327
	43,770	21,777

Creditors falling due within one year

Creditors and accruals	8,721	2,578
Deferred income	5,450	3,000
	14,171	5,578

Net current assets	29,600	16,199
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Net assets	29,733	16,466
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Funds

Unrestricted income fund		
- designated	7,785	7,785
Unrestricted income fund		
- not designated	14,090	8,127
Restricted income funds	7,858	554
	29,733	16,466

I have examined the summarised accounts of North London Action for the Homeless for the year ended 31 March 2008. The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised accounts in accordance with the recommendations of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice. I have carried out the procedures I consider necessary to ascertain whether the summarised accounts are consistent with the full accounts from which they have been prepared.

In my opinion the summarised accounts are consistent with the full accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009.

Kim D Hooper
58 Knebworth Avenue
London E17 5AJ

Thanks

NLAH would like to thank:

Local shops and organisations who donate food, especially **Wholefoods, The Spence Bakery and Growing Communities** for their fantastic fresh fruit and vegetables.

Individual supporters especially **St Mary's Church Stoke Newington.**

Workers from partner agencies including **the TB outreach team at the Homerton and the Hackney DAART Team.**

Walthamstow Sai Group who prepare and deliver a delicious curry once a month.

The Yapp Charitable Trust

The West Hackney Parochial Charity

StreetSmart

Hilden Charitable Trust.

City Parochial Foundation

Photography: thanks to **Jackie di Stefano.**

Can you help?

NLAH relies on volunteers and all kinds of donations to provide this much needed service.

If you would like to support our work please contact Mike Tomes, Centre Manager details below.

