

LEARNING VISIT REPORT
East European Advice Centre 10996

<p>1.1 Date of visit: 25/04/2016</p>	<p>1.2 Name of visiting Grants Officer: Tim Wilson</p>	<p>1.3 People met with: Barbara Drozdowicz (Director) and Dana Jozefkowicz (Welfare Advisor)</p>
<p>1.4 Programme Area & Outcomes: Older Londoners - fewer older people with depression & more people reporting improved well-being</p>		
<p>1.5 Purpose of the award: £75,000 over three years (3 x £25,000) towards a part time Project Coordinator and associated running costs for a support service with isolated elderly East Europeans on the condition that the organisation can raise the balance of funding for the project.</p>		
<p>MONITORING INFORMATION</p>		
<p>2.1 Project Outcome 1: To expand the existing service to older people through recruitment of a p/t Project Coordinator to oversee 'at home' support services for elderly Eastern Europeans Progress made: Thanks to an outreach programme involving churches, other charities working with older people, statutory agencies, and (in time) word of mouth recommendations, EEAC faced steady demand for support from new clients who had not previously engaged with the charity. In the first year of delivery EEAC worked with 189 isolated older clients, in the second 104, and in the third 286.</p>		
<p>2.2 Project Outcome 2: To reduce the waiting time for older beneficiaries from three weeks to one Progress made: With only part time staff time available to run the programme, the charity used a network of volunteers to determine need, deliver support and respond to the high demand for support. The staff members spoken to during the visit provided several case examples illustrating the level of deprivation among the client population, much of it hidden from statutory bodies and other support providers because clients were unaware of where they could turn to for help. The case work was often described as emotionally draining, and the charity established a programme of supervision to support volunteers.</p>		
<p>2.3 Project Outcome 3: 450 older people from East European backgrounds who have experienced loneliness and isolation report a higher level of self-esteem and well-being at the end of three years Progress made: The charity exceeded its target beneficiary number, largely because demand for the service was higher than anticipated at time of application. The charity maintained good monitoring records throughout the project and gathered numerous testimonies from clients of the benefits arising from the support provided.</p>		

However, EEAC is circumspect about the value of feedback from some clients for this service, noting that some caution is needed when reviewing comments from isolated and vulnerable service users. The charity recognised that many clients came to view the support provided as friendship and were hopeful of maintaining an ongoing relationship with the volunteer they had engaged with. As a result their praise was often effusive. The charity found it challenging to conclude interventions in all cases, especially where it was possible the client may not benefit from ongoing support from another source. The supervision process with volunteers helped here, but the project was often challenging.

2.4 Project Outcome 4: 350 older people from East European backgrounds report easier access to healthcare and wellness activities, and greater access to the support and welfare benefits they are entitled to

Progress made: EEAC gathered data on 1,437 casework interventions (some clients received more than one intervention). The majority of case provision centred on welfare, followed by housing, and together these accounted for 70% of the support delivered. From summer 2015 the charity noticed a significant rise in clients with mental health support needs which it could not attribute to a single causal factor, but noted the difficulty of helping these clients access appropriate NHS services.

GRANT OFFICER COMMENTS

EEAC's programme for older, isolated people was a new service from a charity with an established client base of working age people who needed advice on employment rights, people at risk of homelessness or in substandard housing, and people struggling with abuse. The charity was successful in reaching a previously isolated client group who, by nature of their levels of poverty and limited access to support, received significant benefit from the intervention provided.

The charity relied heavily on a strong network of first generation migrants who could deliver support in mother tongue. Holding the Advice Quality Standard, the programme was overseen professionally but the work was often emotionally draining, and EEAC needed to introduce a supervision programme to ensure that volunteers had the opportunity to discuss the difficult cases they were engaged with.

Despite several applications the charity has not secured continuation funding and has concluded the programme. It hopes to re-start it in the future and is developing a cross-subsidy model whereby paid for services such as immigration advice and skills training might fund the delivery of work that cannot generate income.

The charity suggested that City Bridge Trust develop a pro bono network of City firms who would be willing to deliver skilled support to relatively small charities such as EEAC. Reflecting positively on the funding provided, the charity noted that additional capacity building support would also be very welcome.