

Birmingham Asian Resource Centre
110 Hamstead Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B20 2QS

ANNUAL REPORT

Years April 2008 – March 2009

Tel: 0121 523 0580
Fax: 0121 554 4553
Email: barc@asianresource.org.uk
Website: www.asianresource.org.uk
Registered Charity no: 1093110
Company registration no 435 1686

Forwarding Remarks

Last year we reported that Birmingham City Council's Trading Standards department started to tackle problems caused by loan sharks. Pawnbrokers had reported a 17% increase in business – the pain of recession was upon us. Unfortunately things have gone from bad to worse. Politicians debate about the cause and the extent of the recession, trying to impress people who can solve the problem better while people suffer.

The Centre assisted more people with their debt problems this year, than in previous years. The service has continued to be a unique and beneficial for the community. Overall services have increased over the last year.

The workers at the Centre have worked hard to maintain and improve existing facilities. We appreciate the faith that both old and new clients have had in our work.

The contribution made by staff and volunteers has made the work possible. It would not have been possible without the support of funders, to whom we are grateful.

What was true last year is also true this year that the War in Iraq and Afghanistan is a “War against Terror” or “colonial occupation”. People in the community have their own view. There is nothing new in people having a different opinion than the government. It is quite healthy in a democratic society. However, this debate is being used by some opportunists to point fingers at certain religious minorities in this country, and the Muslims feel that they are being persecuted, while everyday there is a roll call of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Everyday the television news shows pictures of dead service men's bodies being brought home in coffins. The war might be thousands of miles away but its horrors are felt in every sitting room in this country. .

Immigration and Asylum has always been a hot political issues even now that the number of asylum applications has significantly gone down. Debate about foreign prisoners, cheap influx of labour from the new E.E.A. countries, Islamic terrorists has had serious racial undertones. This not only affected immigrants and asylum seekers, but also foreign looking British citizens too. It had a serious detrimental effect on race relations. It is high time that politicians and the media showed some restraint and responsibility, and refrains from the relentless irrational and unfounded propaganda.

The election of the first black president in the U.S.A. should be celebrated by everyone as victory against racism and a new dawn of an era, in which no man or woman shall ever be considered less able because he or she is black. We look forward to seeing positive changes in the U.S.A. and everywhere in the world where people still face discrimination because of their race, caste or religion.

Javed Iqbal
Chair of the Board of Directors

MANAGEMENT

The current Board of Directors of The Birmingham Asian Resource Centre were elected at the AGM of 2008.

The Directors regularly attended meetings, including Sub-Committee meetings. They ensured that all business of the Centre ran smoothly.

The role of Directors is demanding, however, it is unpaid voluntary work. All members deserve recognition for their dedication.

STAFFING

Mrs Amritpal Chana, joined us in August 2008 and left in March 2009. Abdullah Khurram who joined us in 2007 left us in September 2008. Fahima Khatun who joined us in April 2008 left us in September 2008. We thank all of them for their hard work..

The rest of the team remained unchanged. A full list appears in Appendix C.

CENTRE'S WORK AT A GLANCE

Enquiries and clients dealt with during the year

Two years ago, we made changes to this section of the Report, thanks to the new ways of retaining records. We kept the same format this year.

Information related to the work done by the Legal Services contracted caseworkers and Birmingham City Council funded advice workers are stored in our computer system, which can be printed out at any time during the year.

Work performed by other project workers are still recorded manually on our newly designed 'Client Advice Record Form'. These are counted at intervals as required by funders of particular projects. For example, Carers Project and Befriending projects require quarterly reports, while The Big Lottery funded projects need annual reports.

While the client count is common to all projects, the query count varies. For example, the Legal Services monthly report asks for the number of cases opened, number of cases closed. While the Birmingham city Council's Community Initiatives Department will only accept one intervention as one query, irrespective of time taken to deal with the matter, other funders have their own version of reporting formats. It is therefore difficult to report outputs in one simple version, in a concise form for everybody to get a quick idea of the nature and volume of the Centre's work.

We have brought together the common aspects of the requirements of all funders together and produced the following tables. We have also kept the special requirements of particular funders and reported them under the appropriate project headings.

All project reports are independently produced and submitted to the respective funders according to the conditions of funding. The copies of these reports are kept at the Centre, which are audited by

the funders, at their will. These reports are also audited by our own auditors at the end of the financial year.

In the tables below, we have indicated which projects are in or out of the tables.

Table 1, shown on the next page, does not include enquiries dealt with by the Legal Services Commission funded workers.

ENQUIRIES DEALT WITH BY THE CENTRE

Table 1

NATURE OF ENQUIRIES	OFFICE	BY TEL	HOME	TOTAL
WELFARE BENEFITS: (Including Housing, Health & Council Tax)	10,328	1,121	293	11,742
FINANCIAL: a) Advice on Arrears, Rent, Mortgage, Fuel and Utility, Tax etc. b) General money and debt advice	4,016	532	262	4,810
ACCOMMODATION: Housing Applications, Transfers, Repairs, Improvements, Homelessness, Tenancy Queries	942	196	9	1,147
EMPLOYMENT: Legal Rights, Pay, Discrimination, Dismissal, Training, Unemployment, Minimum Wages.	19	21	0	40
EDUCATION: Childminding, School, Adult Education, Special Need, Free School Meals, and Student Grants.	218	29	5	252
ENVIRONMENT: Transport, Pollution, Public Health, Consumer Protection, Rubbish Collection.	132	29	18	179
IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY Advice and Casework	3,846	2,966	5	6,817
HEALTH: Mental, Physical, Health & Safety at work, Alcohol, Drugs, Substance Abuse.	182	21	159	362
COMMUNITY SAFETY: a) Racial Harassment, Disputes, Violence b) Women's Safety, Domestic Violence, Sexual Harassment. c) Security of Property, Vandalism, Crime and Theft Reporting.	1 19 44	6 24 18	1 8 6	8 51 68
COMMUNITY SERVICES: a) Access to Council Services, information on local Councillors, Social Services, Services for Elder People, Recreational Facilities. b) Services to People with Disabilities c) Family Personal: Relationship Guidance, Counselling, Family Breakdown, Child Welfare.	416 612 98	442 299 122	11 494 59	869 1,405 279
OTHER: Joint work with Social Worker, GP, Community Meetings, Befriending Etc	1,311	53	56	1,420
TOTAL	22,184	5,879	1,386	29,449

Table 2**COMPOSITION OF USER GROUP**

These tables contain all clients dealt with by the Centre

2(a)

Categories	Number	%
Number of people with disabilities	1,916	26.96
Number of people unemployed and claiming benefits	5,629	79.21

2(b)

Female	3,412	48.00
Male	3,694	52.00
Total	7,106	100.00

Age

2(c)

0-16	152	2.14
16-19	421	5.92
20-24	296	4.17
25-34	392	5.52
35-44	1,311	18.45
45-64	2,494	35.10
65-74	1,242	17.48
74+	798	11.22
Total	7,106	100.00

Racial/Ethnic Group

2(d)

White – United Kingdom	39	0.55
White – Irish	16	0.23
White – Others	96	1.35
Black – Caribbean	436	6.14
Black – African	594	8.36
Black – Others	68	0.96
Indian	1,191	16.76
Pakistani	1,126	15.85
Bangladeshi	1,966	27.66
Asian - Others	892	12.55
Chinese	11	0.15
Black British	4	0.05
Kashmiri	667	9.39
Total	7,106	100.00

Work performed by the Benefits Plus Project

2(e)

Category Subjects	No. of clients		No. of enquiries
	Male	Female	
Pensioners	166	143	1,387
People with disabilities	172	137	1,398
Multilingual leaflets	10,000 produced		10,000 distributed
Talks given to community venues	51 talks		396 participants
Outreach advice surgeries performed	43 surgeries		416 queries
Home visits	56		288 queries

Worked performed by Carers Project

2(f)

No. of people	Male	Female	No. of queries	No. of clients for whom case files were opened
289	155	134	1,401	42

Work performed by Elders Project

2(g)

No. of client	Age	Ethnic origin				
		Indian	Pakistan	Kashmiri	Bangladeshi	Other
591	All over 60	206	76	141	145	23

Work Preformed by the Big Lottery Immigration Project

2(h)

No of People	Asylum Cases	Family Union	Help for other organisation	New advisors Trained	Leaflets produced and distributed
516	266	250	19	1	3 × 1000

Where did the clients come from?

The Centre saw clients from 34 wards of the Birmingham City Council. 70% of the clients came from 4 wards nearest to The Centre: Lozells and East Handsworth, Soho, Handsworth Wood and Aston.

LANGUAGES USED BY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TO DELIVER SERVICES:

LANGUAGE	TIME AVAILABLE
Bengali	All times
Sylheti	All times
Hindi	All times
Punjabi (Indian)	All times
Punjabi (Pakistani)	All times
Mirpuri	All times
Urdu	All times
English	All times
Gujarati	All times

OPENING HOURS OF THE CENTRE

10am – 5pm.

Open door drop in sessions are as follows:

Monday	10 am – 1:30pm
Tuesday	10 am – 1:30pm
Wednesday (3-5pm immigration & asylum only)	10 am – 1:30pm
Thursday	10 am – 1:30pm
Friday	10 am – 1:30pm

Clients are seen via appointments between 1:30 to 5:00pm

Staff meetings take place on Friday afternoons between 2.30pm – 4.30pm, which is the only time members of staff are unable to see clients or give telephone advice.

The Elders Project workers undertake work in the evenings and at weekends to provide 24-hour cover. They also carry out home visits and see people by appointment on Wednesday afternoons and other times when they are not on advice desk.

1.0 **SERVICES PROVIDED.**

1.1 Open door drop in advice services on every working day of the year (except for staff training day) between the hours of 10a.m. – 1.30p.m.

1.2 Elders Project: Sheltered Accommodation for Asian Elders and outreach work and also to provide 24 hours cover for the residents of sheltered accommodation.

1.3 Carer's Support Services to the Asian carers who live within the Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust catchment area.

1.4 Specialist Immigration Advice Session on an open door drop in first come first serve basis on every working Wednesdays during the whole year between the hours of 3p.m. – 5p.m.

1.5 Specialist casework services in the field of Immigration, Asylum, Welfare Benefits and Debt through contracts with the Legal Services Commission.

1.6 Acted as a resource for women suffering from domestic violence. To receive telephone calls & personal visits from women and / or people acting on their behalf. The knowledge acquired by the Centre in respect of other Women's Hostel in the City of Birmingham and elsewhere preserved and kept up to date. The Centre continued to be a referring agency to Women's Domestic Violence Hostels. The women workers of the Centre should performed necessary work of support and counselling at the Centre by telephone & through home visits. The Centre continued to play its role of advocacy against domestic violence.

1.7 Continued to do:

- Home visits
- Liaising with other agencies
- Advocacy

1.8 Continued to:

- Accept & train volunteers
- Accept & train students

1.9 Continued to provide advice and befriending services.

1.10 Continued to provide resource to the community in its fight for social & racial justice & for empowerment, such as 'West Midlands Anti Deportation Campaign'. Such resource provision did not interfere with the paid work of the Centre; as it was done outside office opening hours.

1.11 Continued to take active part in various regeneration programmes in the area for meaningful benefit for people of the area.

1.12 Continued to take an active part in the devolution process. Took part in local strategic partnerships in Perry Barr and Ladywood constituencies, and in particular took part in the pilot programme, which was developed in the Perry Barr Constituency to provide "Wellbeing Services for Older Adults".

2.0 TRAINING OF WORKERS.

- To provide good quality services to the users and clients of the Centre. All workers of the Centre must be competent in their job.
- Experienced workers need continuous training and retraining. New workers may need, depending on their previous experience, extra initial training.
- For sideways move or for moving up in career ladder, workers of the Centre may need personal development training.

For all the above reasons the Centre has a policy on staff training whereby each worker of the Centre must attend 6cpd hours of training each year. Immigrations caseworkers must do 12cpd hours of training. A training need analysis is carried out every year for each individual worker and for the Centre as a whole. The Centre produced and executed such a plan this year, like every year.

Objectives for the year were:

2.1 To update the Centre's training needs analysis to ensure that all workers of the Centre have a minimum level of training and retraining to do their particular jobs.

2.2 To have at least one properly trained worker in the Centre to perform at least one type of work, which is delivered by the Centre.

2.3 To have sufficient numbers of workers trained in dealing with the most frequently asked queries – such as queries about Welfare Benefits, Jobseekers Allowance, Child Benefits, Tax Credits, etc.

2.4 To have specialist caseworkers in Welfare Benefits and Debt receive at least 6 cpd hours of training in their field of work.

2.5 To have Immigration and Asylum Caseworkers achieved and retained level 2, senior caseworker accreditation under Legal Services Commission's Immigration and Asylum Accreditation scheme.

2.6 To have one asylum worker to continue to receive training on operation of new asylum model and another worker develops the skill through work shadow and training.

2.7 To have Immigration and Asylum caseworkers attend at least 16 cpd hours of training in the year.

2.8 To have Immigration and Asylum caseworkers are trained to a minimum standard of Welfare Benefits Training (if performing Legal Services Contracted casework.)

2.9 All Immigration and Asylum caseworkers have sufficient training in the field to retain / obtain exemptions from the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

2.10 All Immigration and Asylum casework supervisors had achieved and retained accreditation as a supervisor under Legal Services Commission's Immigration and Asylum Accreditation Scheme.

2.11 All workers involved in work funded under "Supporting People Fund" receive adequate training in keeping with "Supporting People Fund" compliance requirements. Reading of guidance, attendance of meetings may form part of such trainings.

2.12 All workers involved in delivering Carer's Support Services – receives sufficient trainings to be aware of issues relating to the “Protection of Vulnerable Adults”: “Healthy Living” “Good Diet” “Benefit of Exercise”, etc.

2.13 All workers involved in project Benefit Plus work of advice and casework in Welfare Benefits for Pensioners and People with disabilities receive adequate but not less than 6cpd hours of training in welfare benefits and other subjects relating to pensioners and people suffering from disabilities.

2.14 All administrative workers receive adequate training and retraining in subjects to do their work such as I.T programmes, internet; administrative and secretarial skills etc. particularly in the new programme Advice-Pro.

2.15 All administrative workers be given opportunities for training in other areas of their personal skills needed for upward career move:

* Nasrin Akhtar in welfare benefits.

* Amardeep Athi in immigration.

They were also trained in usage of the new I.T. system, Advice Pro.

* cps = continuous professional development.

3.0 Funding Security: Liaison with Funders and Appropriate Actions.

The Centre does not have a big reserve; therefore it can only continue to provide services listed in section 1.0. If the funding agreed by its funders continues throughout the whole of the year, funders will continue to deliver the agreed funding only if the Centre delivers the agreed output to the quantity and quality agreed with the funders. In this respect following work has been done:

3.1 Birmingham City Council: Community Services Department: (Advice Services)

The Centre dealt with queries and casework in the year. It did so in accordance with Service Level Agreement made with the Community Services Department including storing of data electronically in the AIMS Programme for the City Council nominated officials to carry out regular checks.

Regular contact and liaison were maintained with the officers of the Voluntary Advice Agencies Support Team – kept them informed and facilitate their visits to the Centre for “spot checks” and annual audits, and fulfilled all other obligations agreed in the Service Level Agreement.

Achievements for the year were:

3.1. Outputs and outcomes required by service level agreements were:

- Enquiries dealt with – 5,500
- Welfare benefits annualized - £400,000.
- Welfare benefits lump sum - £25,000.
- Debt rescheduled - £75,000.
- Debt written off - £5,000.
- Positive immigration decisions - 35.

The Centre achieved all of them.

3.2 Birmingham City Council: Social Care and Health Department: “Supporting People”.

The Centre ran its Sheltered Housing Scheme for Asian Elders based at 42-44, St. Peters Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B19. It maintains 11 household units occupied and provided services to the occupants of these accommodations and necessary outreach services to the non-resident local

elders to the quantity and quality stipulated in the contract for “Supporting People Services” with the City Council Department.

Regular contact and liaison were maintained with the Supporting People Fund Manager of the City Council and the appropriate officers of the Family Housing Association (landlord for the accommodation premises)

Funding for this project has been taken out of the local area based grant making process, to city wide contracting process. A competitive tender bidding process was introduced in Autumn 2007. The Centre made a bid on time, for a 3 year contract of £183,925, starting on 01.04.2008 until 31.03.2010.

The City Council could not complete the assessment process in time, therefore the existing Service Level Agreement was extended for 6 months, to end on 30.09.2008.

In July 2008, the council awarded a 3 year grant starting from 01.10.2008. In December, the council wrote to say that they were reassessing all of the application submitted for 3rd sector funding and they extended the existing funding until 30.09.2009. At the time of writing this report, the City Council’s decision was not known.

3.3 Birmingham City Council: Department of Social Care and Health: ‘Carers Support’

The Centre ran a Carers Support Service for Asian carers who reside within the Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust Area – through continuous employment of 2 part time workers supporting carers of older adults and people with disabilities. The services were of quality and quantity stipulated in the Service Level Agreement. The Centre had met all its obligations under the Service Level Agreement including quarterly monitoring report to and attendance of steering group meetings set up by the City Council.

Regular contact and liaison was maintained with the team leader and other designated officers of the HOB Adult Team.

During the year, for part of the time, project workers were on maternity leave. Their jobs were covered by Fahima Khanom and Nasrin Akhtar, who were given appropriate training and support. They did a very good job to keep services going to the same standard.

Funding for this project has been taken out of the local area based grant making process, to city wide contracting process. A competitive tender bidding process was introduced in Autumn 2007. The Centre made a bid on time, for a 3 year contract of £105,000, starting on 01.04.2008 until 31.03.2010.

The City Council could not complete the assessment process in time, therefore the existing Service Level Agreement was extended for 6 months, to end on 30.09.2008.

In July 2008, the council awarded a 3 year grant starting from 01.10.2008 In December, the council wrote to say that they were reassessing all of the application submitted for 3rd sector funding and they extended the existing funding until 30.09.2009. At the time of writing this report, the City Council’s decision was not known.

3.4 Birmingham City Council - Department of Social Care and Health: Befriending and Community Connections Project.

This pilot project was funded by the city council from 01.06.2007 for 1 year. It was then extended to end on 31.03.2009.

This service is for organizing volunteers to provide a befriending service to elderly residents in the Heart of Birmingham area. This comprises of befriending through home visits, either sitting in or taking the service user out to help them maintain contact with friends, family and the community at large.

Harinder Kaur Bahia was employed as the Coordinator of the project. She has so far recruited 26 volunteers and had provided services to 30 service users.

Funding for this project has been taken out of the local area based grant making process, to city wide contracting process. A competitive tender bidding process was introduced in Autumn 2007. The Centre made a bid on time, for a 3 year contract of £114,906, starting on 01.04.2008 until 31.03.2010.

The City Council could not complete the assessment process in time, therefore the existing Service Level Agreement was extended, to end on 31.03.2009.

In July 2008, the council awarded a 3 year grant starting from 01.10.2008. In December, the council wrote to say that they were reassessing all of the application submitted for 3rd sector funding and they extended the existing funding until 30.09.2009. At the time of writing this report, the City Council's decision was not known.

3.5 Big Lottery Fund: Benefit Plus.

The Project has received funding of £404,748 for the five years starting from 10/7/2006. The contracts of employment for the two existing workers were renewed.

Regular contact and liaison was maintained with the relevant officers of the Big Lottery Fund – including end of year reports. The project met all of its targets during the year

3.6 Legal Services Commission: Contract:

This is by far the largest single source of income for The Centre. The Coordinator kept at all times an active eye on all aspects of performance of this contract work.

This contract has been going through huge and significant changes, the most important of which is moving away from hourly rates of pay to a fixed fee scheme for Welfare Benefit and Debt, and graduated fixed fees for Immigration caseworks.

The Centre holds a 3 year contract till 31/3/2010.

The new schedule given to The Centre was for an 18 months period from 01.10.2007 until 31.03.2009. It stipulated a maximum payment of £494,030.98 for maximum new matter starts of:

Welfare Benefits – 1056, increased to 1,136

Debt – 689, increased to 739

Immigration/Asylum -238, increased to 378.

Payments were made at the closure of the cases, including closure of those cases that started prior to 01.10.2007.

Each welfare benefits matter attracted a payment of £164. Each debt matter attracted a payment of £196. Immigration cases were paid on a graduated fee scheme – a case may attract as little as £255 or as high as £1500, depending on the stages the case goes through. It is for this reason that it was not possible to work out if the number NMS would attract payment of £494,030.98.

By 31.03.2009, the Centre had:

Opened all new matter starts to the increased level.

For the year 01.04.2009 until 31.03.2010 LSC has given us the following NMS:

Welfare Benefits – 704
Debt - 493
Immigration – 235
Asylum – 15

We will be asking for an increase of welfare benefits NMS to 870.

As an interim arrangement, the LSC started paying us £27,446.17 per month. Our claims for the first 6 months were lower than expected, therefore it was agreed that we did not get paid for March 2008. This did not represent a reduction, but an adjustment in payment, as in the long run we will be paid on the basis of claim and fixed payment made will be reconciled.

Our claim based on closed cases were less than anticipated, therefore further reductions to our payment was made by the Legal services commission. The total paid in the year of 07/08 was £276,468 and in 08/09 was £244,933, which resulted in an operational deficit of £33,900 in 07/08 and £53,580 in 08/09.

New changes in LSC contract are being proposed, which will operate from 01.04.2010. It has been getting more and more difficult to earn enough money from this contract to keep it going.

Many solicitors have given up their contract. Many Not-for-profit organisations have also been suffering from the same problems as we are facing. Many are thinking of not bidding for a new contract. We ourselves will have to think hard when the time comes.

3.7 The Big Lottery Fund- Asylum and Immigration Project.

This 3 year project, to help people who do not qualify for legal Aid, employs one full time caseworker and half of one Administrative Worker, received 3 year funding of £138,849 from The Big Lottery Fund, which came to an end on 12.03.2009.

Every effort was made to secure replacement funding to continue this project, which performed very essential tasks and complemented the Centre's work for Legal Aid clients. Renewed funding from The Big Lottery Fund was refused. Applications were made to various Trusts but failed to attract any funding. At the end the project had to close. Two workers employed in the project found jobs elsewhere and left the Centre. The Centre has to fulfil the same demand with less number of workers.

4.0 Buildings Repairs:

During the year, the city Council's Economic development department had agreed a capital grant of £73,000 for external and internal repairs of the office building. The Centre will provide some £20,000 match funding. The work will be carried out in the financial year 09/10.

5.0 FINANCE

In the year 2009– 2010 The Centre will receive the following funding:

1. Birmingham City Council:
 - Community Services Department £66,700

• Social Care and Health Department (Supporting People)	£56,004
• Social Care and Health (Carers Support)	£34,680
• Social Care and Health (Befriending and Community Connection)	£34,994
2. Legal Services Commission	£264,000
3. Legal services Commission VAT	£41,000
4. Big Lottery – Benefit Plus	£80,800
5. On call cost	£4,094

5.1 How will the money be spent?

A. **Grant from Community Services Department** (£66,700) will contribute to the: running cost of the Centre + salary cost of 4 workers:
 Muhammad Idrish (Coordinator) (17.5 hrs)
 Kashmiro Kaur (Welfare Rights Worker) (17.5 hrs)
 Rajvinder Dule (Debt Advisor) (17.5 hrs)
 Sobia Parveen (Admin Worker) (17.5 hrs).

B. **Grant from Social Care and Health** (£56,004) will contribute to the: running cost of the Centre + salary cost of 2 workers:
 Anil Bhalla (Elders Project Coordinator)
 Kasha Masih (Elders Outreach Worker)

C. **Contract payment from Legal Services Commission** of £264,000, will pay for the equivalent of 5.5 caseworkers / supervisors and also 3.5 administrative workers.

Mahesh Patel
 Amarjit Sagoo
 Kashmiro Kaur (17.5 hrs)
 Raj Dule (17.5 hrs)
 Juma Begum
 Asha Devi Mudara
 Sobia Parveen (17.5 hrs)
 Nasreen Akhtar
 Farzana Majeed (17.5 hrs)
 Ranjeet Devi
 Niomi Smith (17.5 hrs)
 Muhammad Idrish (17.5 hrs)
 Sessional workers (if needed) or
 Overtime payment (if needed)

D. **Grant from Social Care and Health** (£34,680) will be used for contribution to the running cost of the Centre plus salary cost of 2 part time Carers support Workers:
Naheed Begum (17.5 hrs)
Rafiya Khatun (17.5 hrs).

E. **Grant from Big Lottery Fund** (Benefit Plus) (£80,800) will be used for contribution to the running cost of the Centre plus salary cost of 2 Benefit Plus Workers.
Ajmal Khan – Benefit Plus Worker for People with Disabilities.
Sobur Khan – Benefit Plus Worker for Pensioners.

G. **Grant from Social Care and Health Department (£34,994)** will be used for contribution to the running cost of the Centre plus salary cost of one full time Coordinator.
Harinder Kaur Bahia – Coordinator of The Befriending and Community Connection Project for Elders. Subject to the centre receiving funding for the whole year.

6.0 CHANGES THAT WILL EFFECT THE CENTRE'S WORK

Social Changes: Amongst Asian Communities.

- Number of elders and pensioners increasing, number of people suffering from disabilities and long term health conditions are also increasing. Lack of knowledge and the complexities of benefits entitlement are such that they do not claim / get all the social security and non social security benefit entitlements. The Centre should set up a project to improve the situation. More funding should be sought for the purpose. More work needed to be done with the elderly, pensioners and disabled people.
- The Centre should carry on with its advocacy role with the appropriate authorities for more day care and home help and befriending facilities for Asian elders and people with disabilities and long term health conditions.
- Rise in single mothers, rise in the number of households where both parents are working: needing affordable, accessible and culturally sensitive childcare facilities. The Centre should continue its campaign for more child care places.
- School achievements increasing amongst Asian young people. Facilities have to increase for student placement and volunteers. Support for job applicants, in-jobs support and ambition raising activities to be undertaken.
- Rise in single mother household amongst Asian people mean provisions for good quality advice services for Asian women needed. This Centre should take a lead to increase its services for Asian women.

Economic.

- * The credit crunch and reduced availability of fixed term mortgages, couples with fall of house prices and increase in fuel and grocery bills are putting new debt burden on people's shoulder. The Centre should increase its debt advice work and seek new/increased funding fro debt counselling.
- Employment in traditional manufacturing industries has gone down and decreasing.
 - More skill training and retraining essential.
 - Unemployed need to access correct Welfare Benefit and non Welfare Benefits, job search facilities and to get training in job applications and interview techniques.
 - New outlook to life with temporary, part time work – leisure activities.
- Legal Services Commission Contract is not earning enough money to break even, which will have a serious effect in the long run if it continues in the same way.

Political.

- Far right's advances seem to have been halted in recent local elections but people's fear of cheap labour migration from new EEA Countries is being exploited by political opportunists to create divisions amongst different ethnic minority communities. The Centre should at all times act as a symbol of unity and show solidarity to all oppressed groups. It should increase its campaigning role to defeat right wing and divisive political opportunists.
- There has been a change in the political situation in Birmingham. After 20 years, the Labour Party lost control of Birmingham City Council. It is now being run by a coalition of Conservative and Liberal Democrats. Last year the Conservatives became the largest party in Birmingham City Council. While the ruling coalition promised that they will not make any policy change, however voluntary sector funding has been going through quite a few changes. The old committee structure has been disbanded in favour of a cabinet system. Therefore cabinet members hold a lot of power.

- New realignment in the party politics in Birmingham wards and constituencies has been taking shape in line with change of council leadership. City Council's funding for voluntary advice agencies such as ours could be enmeshed in this process. We must be vigilant in keeping our organization independent, free of fear or favour from party or electoral politics.
- Immigration and Asylum has always been a hot political issue, it is so even now that the number of asylum applications has significantly gone down. Debate about foreign prisoners being released without first being considered for deportation had a serious racial undertone. Not only the immigrants or asylum services but the immigration advisors are being undermined by relentless, irrational and unfounded propaganda.
- War in Iraq and Afghanistan is a "War against Terror" or "colonial occupation". People in the community have their own view. There is nothing new in people having a different opinion than the government, in fact it is quite healthy in a democratic society. However, this debate is being used by some opportunists to point fingers at certain religious minorities in this country, and the Muslims feel that they are being persecuted.

We the advice agencies stand for people's rights and justice. We must keep our nerve and stand firm in such difficult times. It will be particularly difficult for our organization – being called Asian Resource Centre, we are perceived as being immigrants ourselves. Caution must be exercised in dealing with others perceptions about us.

Opportunities.

1. Action plan produced in January 2004 by Birmingham Community Legal Services Partnership identified provision for good quality legal advice for Asian women as a priority for future. Our organization is in the best position to offer these services. Four out of six of our caseworkers are female Asians. Eleven out of eighteen of our total workforce are female. We continue to be in the best position to bid for extra contract hours from LSC and extend our services, increase finances and create more employment for Asian women. While the said action plan may have got lost in the local L.S.C. office under the new priorities necessitated by the new contract. We remain ready as need for Asian women to get good quality legal advice remains a priority for them who needs it.

2. Data available from 2001 census and the current projection about population in Birmingham in the near future is such that the City will soon become a majority Black City. Therefore being a Black led organisation- opportunities for us to grow bigger is very good.

7.0 VOLUNTEERS

As an organisation we always cater for volunteers, believing that individuals wishing to volunteer would benefit from working in the Centre.

Last year we had 26 volunteers who had worked for the Centre during the whole year. Volunteers work under supervision of a named worker, they are treated the same way as paid workers in every aspect, except pay. The Centre has a written volunteer policy.

People wishing to do voluntary work at the Centre, should in the first instance contact the Centre and obtain an application form. Places are limited, so those who would benefit most are offered a place for a fixed period through an interview with the Co-ordinator.

8.0 **STUDENTS**

As part of our commitment to developing local people's potential. The Centre has always offered places to students from local Educational Institutions. As a local agency, our policy is to offer some places to the students of the local schools. We continue to do so.

Last year we took 6 students, who came from Broadway School, Aston Manor, Perry Beaches and George Dixon Schools.

Students are supervised by a named worker and they are treated the same way as any other member of staff and enjoy the same privileges, except a salary.

9.0 **OTHER USERS OF THE CENTRE**

The Centre has continued its role of being a resource to the community in its fight for social and racial justices and for empowerment of the communities it serves. It has supported the following groups:

National Coalition Of Anti Deportation Campaigns

This is a coalition of up to 10 individual campaigns from all over the country. BARC provides management support and postal address.

National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns is based at the home address of its co-ordinator – who can be contacted on 0121 554 6947.

OT Services

The Occupational Therapy Department of the City Council, ran outreach surgeries from the Centre, once a month.

10.0 **Organisations BARC worked with during the year:**

- Bangladeshi Youth Forum
- BTU
- Birmingham Voluntary services Council
- Family Housing Association
- Consumer Advice Centre
- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Perry Barr – Local Strategic Partnership
- Birmingham Law Centre
- Aston Legal Centre
- Saltley & Nechells Law Centre
- Broadway School
- George Dixon International School
- Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Trust
- Help the Aged
- Age Concern
- National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaign
- Refugee Council
- Birmingham Racial Attack Monitoring Group

Birmingham City Council Departments:

- Equalities division
- Asylum Seekers Support Team
- Various Neighbourhood Offices
- Housing Department
- Social Care and Health area offices

And many others

APPENDIX A

List of Board of Directors as elected on 29/11/2007

Name.	Ethnic Group	Position	M/F	Disability
1. Mr Javed Iqbal	Kashmiri	Chair	M	N
2. Mr Mohinder Pal Upal	Indian	Treasurer	M	N
3. Mr. Toufique Ahmed	Bangladeshi	Director	M	N
4. Mr. Aftabur Rahman	Bangladeshi	Director	M	N
5. Ms Gargi Bhattacharyya	Indian	Director	F	N
6. Ms Kamaljeet Nijjar Deu	Indian	Director	F	N
7. Mr. Mahtab Khan	Pakistani	Director	M	Y
8. Mr. Mohammed Shafique	Pakistani	Director	M	N
9. Mr. Safdar Mir	Kashmiri	Director	M	N
10. Mr. Ghulam Nabi	Kashmiri	Director	M	N
11. Ms Zaitoon Begum	Kashmiri	Director	F	N

APPENDIX B

Sub-Committees of the Board of Directors.

1. Women's Sub-Committee: Ms K Nijjar-Deu
 Ms G. Bhattacharyya

2. Employment Sub-Committee: Ms G Bhattacharyya
 Mr. J Iqbal
 Mr G Nabi

3. Legal Services Commission
 Franchise Sub-Committee: Mr P Upal
 M M Khan
 Mr. A Rahman

APPENDIX C

List of workers at the Centre as on 1/4/2008.

<u>Name.</u>	<u>Job Title</u>
1. M Idrish	Coordinator/Supervisor.
2. K.Kaur	Women's Welfare Rights Worker/ Caseworker.
3. A. Khurram	Immigration and Asylum Caseworker (until Sept 2008).
4. A. Mudara	Immigration and Asylum Caseworker.
5. A. Bhalla	Elders Project Coordinator.
6. K. Masih	Elders Outreach Worker.
7. M. Patel	Welfare Benefit Caseworker.
8. A. Athi	Advice Worker / Administrative Worker.
9. R. Dule	Advice Worker / Debt Caseworker.
10. R. Khatun	Carer's Support Worker.
11. H. Bahia	Befriending & Community Connections Project Coordinator.
12. S. Khan	Welfare Benefits Plus – Pensioners.
13. A. Khan	Welfare Benefits Plus – Disabilities.
14. N. Begum	Carer's Support Worker.
15. A. Sagoo	Debt Advice Caseworker / Supervisor.
16. N. Akhtar	Administrative Worker.
17. F. Majid	Administrative Worker.
18. R. Devi	Administrative Worker.
19. N. Smith	Administrative Worker.
20. S. Parveen	Administrative Worker.
21. A. Chana	Immigration Caseworker (from Aug 08 to Mar 09)
22. F. Khanom	Administrative Worker /Carers Support Worker (April to Sept 09)

23. H. Lakha

Housing Worker – Seconded by Birmingham City Council.
3 days per week

Minutes of A.G.M. held on 20.11.2008

1.0 Present:

30 members, plus guests and members of staff.

1.1 Apologies:

T. Ahmed, K. Nijjar-Deu, M. Khan, A. Rahman.

1.2 Chair's Opening Remarks:

J. Iqbal, the Chair of the B.O.D. opened the meeting by welcoming everybody who was present at the meeting. He thanked all the members of staff for their hard work and the members of B.O.D. for steering the organisation throughout the year.

The Chair observed that the organisation has been going on for over 30 years and doing good work for the community it serves.

He said that the difficult time of recession and credit crunch has started hitting us all, especially the members of the community who we serve and work with. He hoped that we can go through it together.

There has been some natural disasters in the land where we came from: floods in Beluchistan and Bihar, political disturbances in Pakistan is taking its toll on ordinary and innocent people – the bombings and shootings are probably killing more people in Pakistan than in Afghanistan or Iraq.

We all must put into use whatever influence we have and do whatever we can, to help our people living in the U.K. or back in the country of our origin.

2.0 Minutes of the A.G.M. held on 29/11/2007

- Was agreed to be a true record.

2.1 Matters arising out of the above minutes:

S. Mirza raised that all actions listed in sections 9.2.1 to 9.2.5 had not taken place. He asked the B.O.D. to follow them through.

The Chair asked S. Mirza to liaise with the coordinator with a name and address of the person or organisations, to whom the donation could be made.

3.0 Annual Report:

The Coordinator, M. Idrish presented the annual report of the Centre for the year 2007/2008. In doing so he made the following points:

- The report was written in April 2008 and is being presented in November 2008. A lot has happened in the financial health of the country during the last six months.
- Birmingham City Council opened a "Loan Shark Department." "Pawn Brokers," business has been increasing. Banks have to be rescued, unemployment has been going up

– all signs of a significant downturn in the economy and resulting recession, which is already having an effect on the life of people the Centre works for. It will probably get worse.

- The Centre has seen increased demand in welfare benefits and debt advice. Legal Services Commission has already increased ‘matter starts’ in the area of debt once. We have asked for the second time to increase ‘matter starts,’ which reflects the desperate situation of the finance of the people the Centre deals with.
- The Centre dealt with 32,252 queries, of which 12,868 related to welfare benefits, 4664 related to debt, 1695 related to accommodation and 7922 related to immigration. 76.34% of the 7167 people dealt with by the Centre were unemployed, 31.51% were over the age of 65 years.
- Immigration Rules have been tightening again. From 24/11/2008 spouses wanting to enter the UK must be 21 years of age or over, while the age of contracting a legal marriage in the UK remains 18.
Points based migration has replaced the sector based work permit and highly skilled migration system. This has shut the door for people from poor countries, as a large number of points are allocated on the basis of your income in your own country. Income of £40,000p.a attracts 25 points – who earns that amount in Bangladesh? If somebody could earn that much there why would they want to migrate to the UK? Only those employers who are registered with the UK Home Office are allowed to apply for workers under the system.
- It is proving to be very difficult to earn money through the Legal Aid contract. Last year, our income was down by £46,000. This year it will be down by £66,000.
- Birmingham City Council refused grant aid for the Befriending Project for elders, from 01.04.2009.
- Big Lottery Fund refused renewal of grant aid from 01.04.2009 for the Immigration Advice Project.
- The effects of cuts in grant aid and reduced Legal Aid income will result in redundancies and reduction in the work force, which in turn can get into a downturn spiral.

He concluded by saying that the economic situation of the country as a whole is probably correctly reflected in the economic situation of the Centre itself, but we should not get too gloomy. The Centre came into existence in the economic gloom of the 1970’s and has survived through up and downs of the intervening years. In the future it will survive, because it has to survive.

The Chair asked for comments and contributions from the floor.

* G. Bhattacharyya:

Wanted to reflect on the points about immigration control. I work in Aston University, where we have non-EU foreign academics and students. We are now expected to report to the Home Office if students or academics were absent from their course or studies or from the duties, otherwise we will be committing a criminal offence. Colleagues have to spy on colleagues, teachers have to spy on students. We have been turned into immigration police.

* Y. Taryabi:

Recently one of my relatives applied for a visitor’s visa to come and see her daughter who had life threatening cancer. The Consultant from The Selly Oak Hospital gave a medical report urging the visa officer to be compassionate. The application was refused on the ground that the mother was not genuinely seeking a visitor’s visa. An appeal was lodged and further letters were sent with it. The daughter died before the appeal was heard. Mother could not see her daughter before she died – how cruel could the British Immigration

Authority be? I want Birmingham Asian Resource Centre to minute it and do something about it so that it does not happen to anybody else in the future.

S. Mirza:

Raised a point about section 6.0 on page 15 of the Annual report and asked, what changes have been made to employees' contracts of employment?

M. Idrish:

Responded by saying that no change has yet been made. The Centre took legal advice, which said that to implement the changes, the Centre will have to consult the employees and reach an agreement. Without employees agreement, changes proposed could not be made. The process of consultation has not started yet.

S. Mirza: "Could you tell me what are the proposed changes?"

M. Idrish: The employees have not yet been informed of the proposed changes, therefore he could not inform anybody else before the employees themselves were informed. Once proposals are consulted upon, agreement reached or not, he will be in a position to inform anybody – what the proposals were and what were the outcome of the consultation, not before that.

- The annual report was approved by the meeting.

4.0 Audited Accounts 2007/2008.

Birmingham Asian Resource Centre – the Accounts entitled "Reports and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2008, was earlier circulated to all members with the calling notice of the AGM.

Mr Anil Bhalla, The Company Secretary orally presented it to the meeting and answered questions.

He said that the report was produced by the Company Accountant, Mr Bhawan Soma, approved by the Board of Directors in their meeting on 24/07/2008, signed by the Director Toufique Ahmed and Chair, Javed Iqbal on behalf of the Board. It was audited and certified by the Company's elected auditors Griffiths and Griffiths, signed by George H. G. Griffith, Registered Auditor.

Mr Bhalla went through the income and expenditure sections and pointed out that there was an operational deficit of £33,900.

In reply to a question from the floor, Mr Bhalla said that the Centre owns its office premises at 110 Hamstead Road, there is no mortgage on it.

- The meeting approved the accounts.

5.0 Appointment of Auditors:

5.1 On behalf of the Board of Directors. J. Iqbal, the Chair formally moved that: "Griffiths & Griffiths" be re- elected as the Auditors for The Centre, for the financial year 2008/2009.

The meeting unanimously approved the motion.

6.0 Election of Directors.

6.1 J. Iqbal, the Chair explained to the meeting that according to the Rules of the Centre, Directors are elected for 3 years, at the end of which they must retire. The retiring Directors may seek re-election. The following directors having served 3 years have retired, they have also indicated that they want to be re-elected.

The Directors are:

- * Mr Paul Upal
- * Ms. Gargi Bhattacharyya
- * Mr Aftab Rahman
- * Ms Kamaljeet Nijjar-Deu.

The Board of Directors in their meeting of 13/11/2008 agreed to recommend them for re-election. Therefore on behalf of the Board, he formally moved that:

All 4 of the retiring Directors named above be re-elected as Directors.

- The meeting unanimously approved the motion.

7.0 Other Motions:

The following motion was earlier circulated in the meeting. It was moved by G. Bhattacharyya and seconded by S. Mirza.

Motion on Poverty in Birmingham

This meeting notes with concern the recent report from the End Child Poverty Campaign in which Ladywood Constituency was shown to have the highest proportion of children in poor households in the country – an estimated 81% of children. A number of other constituencies also registered extremely high rates of child poverty. Predictably, this includes some areas that are predominantly BME.

The meeting resolves to:

1. Call a meeting of local voluntary sector organisations, statutory bodies and concerned citizens to initiate a campaign to combat child poverty in the city.
2. Lobby local and national government to ensure that resources allocation continues to address this urgent problem.
3. Raise the profile of the End Child Poverty Campaign in Birmingham and raise awareness of the issues with the wider community.

In moving the motion, G. Bhattacharyya said:

- A large number of the people served by the Centre come from the Ladywood Constituency. The constituencies of Perry Barr and Small Heath are also in the same league and where the Centre's core users came from. These constituencies are home to a very large number of black and minority ethnic people. The Centre has a moral duty to campaign for a reduction and eradication of Child poverty. She was herself willing to take a lead to call meetings of all concerned to start the campaign in Birmingham.
The meeting unanimously approved the motion.

8.0 Any other Business

None

End.