

Annual Review 2008/9



lasa

1984-2009

www.lasa.org.uk

**supporting the sector
through uncertain times**

Annual Review 2008/9

This year – in our 25th year of service – we've helped thousands of voluntary organisations – from **Age Concern and Help the Aged** to **Citizens Advice Bureaux** and **RNIB** – to rebuild their clients' lives.

Supporting the sector through uncertain times

Chair's report

Lasa believes that access to high quality, understandable legal advice should be available to all who need it – not just those who can pay for it.

In a year of such uncertainty for the country and the economy, I believe the trusted, relevant, practical advice provided by Lasa becomes even more important.

As people in crisis seek to understand their rights and identify their options, they turn to their local advisers. Our role is to make sure these advice workers have the information they need at their fingertips, that they have properly trained staff and access to a network that can help them through the trickiest problem. We achieve these goals through our team of dedicated and expert staff.

This year we helped thousands of advice agencies give better advice to their clients. Our acclaimed website Rightsnet was praised by the Cabinet Office for helping advice workers 'learn from the experience of colleagues' and 'improve outcomes for clients.' Our staff worked closely with government to raise the profile of independent advice so

people know there is a trustworthy source of help available to them – and where they can go to find it.

Lasa's ICT (information and communications technology) services have helped countless voluntary sector

organisations manage the rapidly rising demand for their services this year.

The last year has been a challenging one for Lasa, but I am very proud of everything our staff have achieved. We have many exciting plans for next year including expanding our Rightsnet service, a new ICT project which thousands of organisations will benefit from and more campaigns to influence government policy as demand for the sector's services rise. Here's to the next 25 years.

Liz Sewell
Chair



Our impact 2008/9

- Our welfare rights website Rightsnet received over **35 million** hits
- **276,000** visits were made to the Knowledgebase – regarded as the ‘go to’ resource for the voluntary sector’s ICT questions
- Rightsnet was used by more than **4,000** organisations across the UK including Citizens Advice Bureaux, RNID, RNIB and the BBC
- Our Multikulti website – legal advice guides translated into **12** community languages – received over **15 million** hits
- **2,500** individuals and organisations benefitted from Computanews, Lasa’s comprehensive guide to voluntary sector ICT issues

20 million people across the UK had legal problems this year

Legal advice is a vital safety net

Millions of people across the UK – and all across its social spectrum – urgently needed legal advice this year as they got into financial difficulties.

In response to this need we continued to campaign effectively on access to justice issues, working closely with MPs, MEPs, councillors and funders to highlight this growing need.

We helped represent the interests of over 1,000 advice workers through our London Advice Forum initiative, which is regarded as a key body to consult on issues affecting access to advice across London. In 2008/9 we were asked to work alongside London funders, MPs, the GLA and the Mayor's Office and presented at London Councils advice sector meetings.



With millions unemployed, more people than ever before needed urgent welfare benefits and tax credits advice. Our Rightsnet website attracted more than 35 million hits this year and was used by over 4,000 organisations, including Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Child Poverty Action Group and the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

In its July 2008 report 'Excellence and fairness: Achieving world class public services', the government highlighted the importance of Rightsnet in helping advisers to share best practice 'in an effective and efficient way' to 'improve outcomes for their clients'.

We helped thousands of advice workers solve their clients' welfare benefits problems. Our trainers, who are all leading experts in the welfare benefits field, trained over 1,300 advice workers.

Over 10,000 advice workers read our publication Review, keeping up to date with changes in welfare benefits and tax credits.

“ ... as far as online resources go there is little to beat Rightsnet. This site contains a wealth of resources for people working in the welfare benefits field ...

Social Security Legislation 2008/2009:
published by Sweet and Maxwell

“ One success has been the United Kingdom's 'Rightsnet'. This was created by the London Advice Services Alliance, which saw the potential of bringing together the many organisations and individuals offering advice to UK residents about their welfare rights.

Paul Johnston and Martin Stewart-Weeks,
Cisco

“ With the knowledge gained I won the appeal ... the training was extremely clear and helped immensely with explaining changes in the law to clients.

Liz Yilmaz, Refugee Health Advocacy
Worker, Lewisham Refugee Network

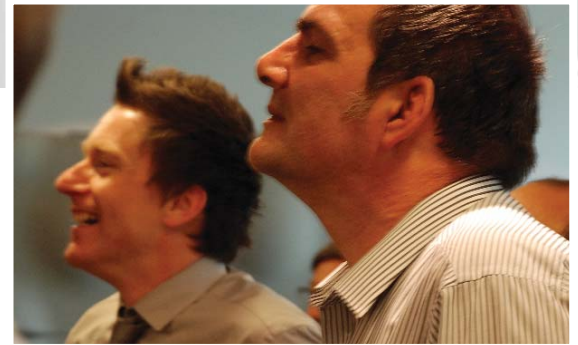
Helping the third sector meet rising demand for its services

Since 1984 our ICT services have helped 1000s of organisations use ICT to save money, be more efficient and to deliver better services to those in need.

As demand for the sector's services rose our ICT services were used by more organisations than ever before.

This year we were delighted to work closely with the City Bridge Trust, Wates Foundation and Cripplegate Foundation on the 'Building Bridges to ICT excellence' project. We helped grant officers at these funders and London voluntary sector organisations with the ICT elements of funding bids.

Over 276,000 visits were made to the ICT Knowledgebase, the UK's leading website for ICT advice, information and resources for the voluntary sector. Capacitybuilders funded us to create specific resources for the sector on how to get the most from their ICT via the ICT Knowledgebase.



We undertook over 20 significant ICT consultancy projects; our clients included MLA London and the Development Trusts Association.

We launched our Big Lottery funded project to help freelance ICT voluntary sector workers develop their skills, and provide even better support and advice to the thousands of organisations they work with. The project will help these organisations benefit from high quality ICT advice and support which they could not normally afford.

We have worked closely with Capacitybuilders, the Greater London Assembly (through London Connects), and the Government Office for London, and leading funders to develop a high profile strategy that effectively meets the ICT infrastructure needs of the sector. Our work in this area has been recognised by securing funding for the role of London ICT Champion for a further three years.

“ ... firmly associated with quality advice and guidance on ICT matters. Knowledgebase hugely valuable.

Paul Webster, National Association of Voluntary and Community Action

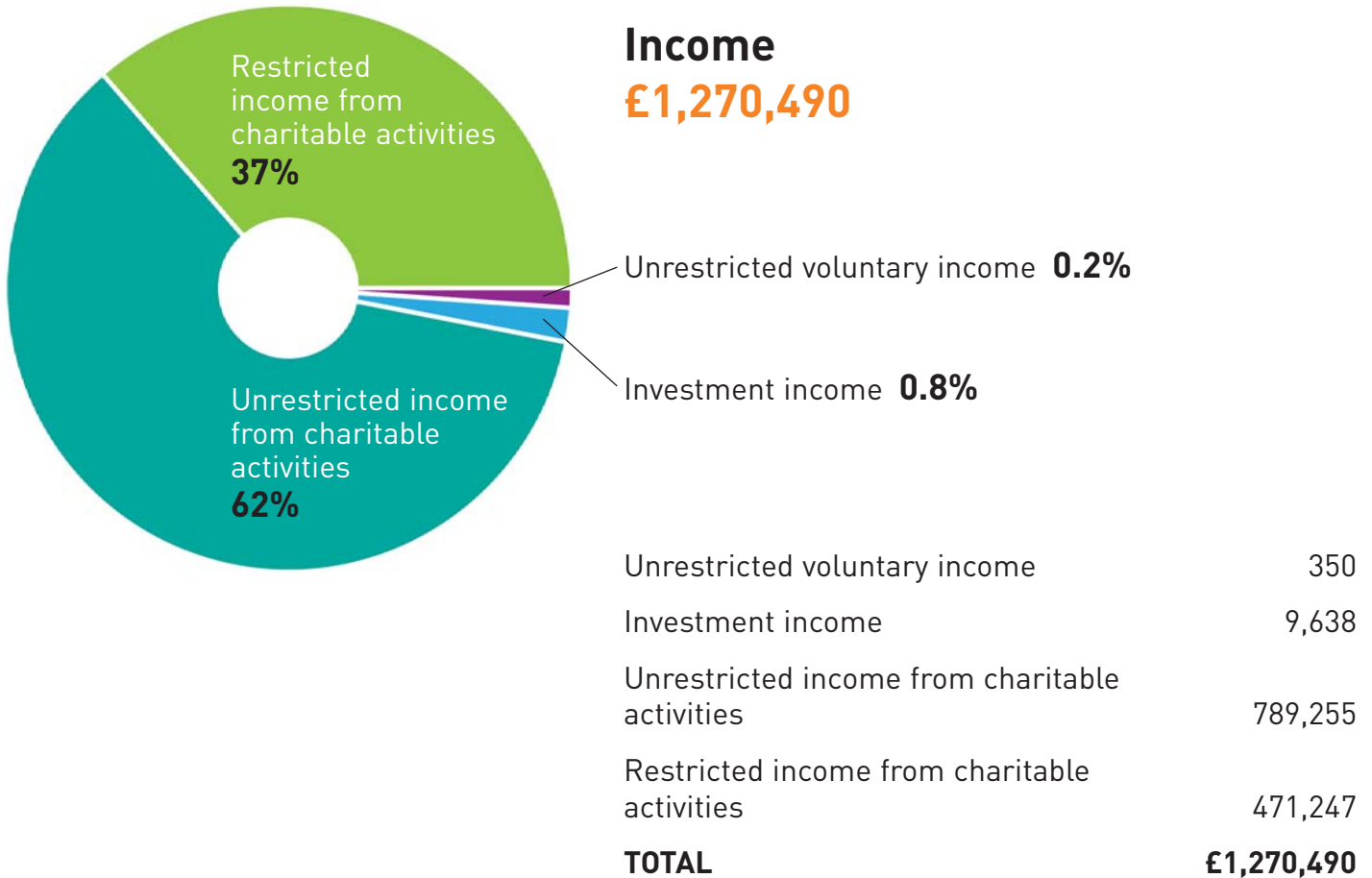
“ I’ve turned to LASA for years and you’ve never let me down! ... your knowledge and resources related to IT are invaluable.

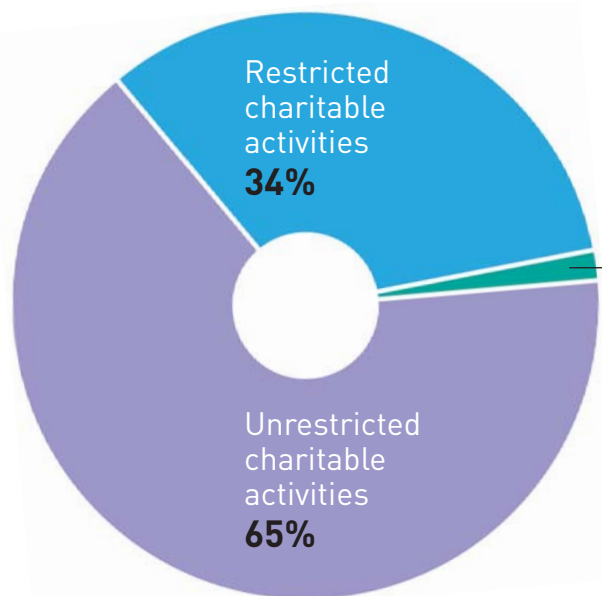
SHARE Community Ltd

“ Very useful for signposting to. Also personal contacts which are useful for partnership working and peer support within ICT in the voluntary sector. Basically if the LASA ICT team didn’t exist I’d want someone to create it!

Alyson Moore, ICT Manager, LVSC

Income and expenditure





Expenditure

£1,343,239

Governance **1%**

Unrestricted charitable activities	878,803
Restricted charitable activities	444,271
Governance	20,165
TOTAL	£1,343,239

If you would like a full copy of Lasa'a Audited Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009 please contact us.

These figures are extracted from accounts independently audited by Gotham Erskine LLP.

Thank you

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following funders who made invaluable contributions to our work in 2008/9.

Big Lottery Fund

Capacitybuilders

The City Bridge Trust

City Parochial Foundation

Cripplegate Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

The European Commission

European Social Fund

London Councils

The London Legal Support Trust

NAVCA

NCVO

Wates Foundation

We also undertook a contract from the **Legal Services Commission** to deliver a Specialist Support Service in Welfare Benefits (Wales).



Cripplegate Foundation Helping since 1500

Pro bono

We are grateful to City law firm **Mayer Brown LLP**, and to the **City Bridge Trust**, for kindly donating their meeting rooms to us for a number of events.

We are also grateful to the following for their help.

James Evans

“ I’ve worked for over twenty two years in marketing and communications for financial services and a wide range of businesses including Asda (as Head of Public Relations) and Norwich Union (as director of media relations for UK operations). I am pleased to be working with Lasa on how it can communicate more effectively with its stakeholders.

I’ve found working with Lasa at a time when so many organisations need their services very rewarding and interesting, and I look forward to developing its stakeholder communications further.

Charlie Hulme

“ After more than ten years of working in business and consumer projects for MasterCard & Ink Publishing, I decided that I wished to use my skills and experience in the charity sector. I was delighted to undertake some pro bono work for Lasa as I was impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of their staff.

I worked closely with Lasa’s training team to help them strengthen relationships with the leading charities and statutory sector organisations who use their training service. I did this by talking to these organisations to find out what they wanted from us – and how we could support those needs. I was really happy with how we improved the training service for our clients as a result.

Our board

Chair

Liz Sewell is former Chief Executive of lone parent's charity Gingerbread. She has worked at a national level with government departments, including the Cabinet Office, the Department of Health, Department for Work and Pensions and the Sure Start Unit, and locally with NHS trusts, local authorities and voluntary organisations such as Daycare Trust and One Parent Families on strategic, communications and training projects.

Liz leads the Take Three Days programme, which works with national and local government organisations to help parents return to work, education and training.

Vice Chair

Hugh Lyons is highly experienced in advice sector issues, and is former manager of a Citizens Advice Bureau. He also has an extensive background in research.

Treasurer

John Blandford has many years of experience both as an IT Consultant and a senior IT Manager, and works as a self employed IT consultant for a number of charity, private and public sector organisations. He is Chair of another leading charity.

Trustees

Nadine Clarkson Palomares is a lawyer at Hansen Palomares Solicitors, a well known law firm in the welfare benefits field. She is well versed in charity management and in working with voluntary and public sector minority groups.

Annette Figueiredo has worked at a number of national charities in development and advice. She currently works in Policy and Partnerships at Greater London Authority.

Jenny Keohane has over thirty years experience as an advice worker with organisations including two Citizens Bureaux and Gingerbread, where she managed their advice line. She is now retired but also works with the Old Bailey Witness Service as a volunteer.

Paul Lowenberg is former Chief Executive of Edinburgh District Council. He has recently been appointed as Chair of Ascham Homes, the Waltham Forest ALMO. Previously he was a board member of Mosaic Housing Association, and regeneration company EDI Ltd. He now runs a public and voluntary sector focused consultancy practice. Throughout his career he has developed and reviewed major advice and information services projects.

Samantha Mauger is Chief Executive of a high profile London- based network of charities which works closely with key voluntary and statutory sector organisations. She has particular interests in advice, equality and social inclusion.

Lasa – the future

This year – like many other charities – we've worked very hard to keep pace with the rapidly increasing demand for our services.

Like many organisations in the sector we haven't had an easy year – but we are fortunate enough to have secured good, sustainable funding for the next few years. We are very grateful to our funders for their support.

Many of you have been kind enough to tell me how much our services have helped you and your clients over the last 25 years. It is heartening to know that the work we do every day helps thousands of people across the UK access the benefits and the legal advice they need to keep their heads above water and rebuild their lives at this difficult time. And we're delighted that we've been able to help so many organisations use ICT to provide better services for their clients, be more efficient and save money over the last 25 years.

We have many exciting plans for next year including expanding our Rightsnet service, a new ICT project which thousands of organisations will benefit from, and more campaigns to influence government policy as demand for the sector's services rise.



Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who has supported us over the last 25 years. My board, staff and volunteers are all passionate about giving you the best support possible for the next 25 years – and beyond – to help you improve the lives of your clients. We look forward to working with you.

Andy Gregg
Chief Executive

How we can help you

Welfare rights advice

Lasa is well known for its innovative projects in the field of welfare rights advice including:

Rightsnet – With millions of hits each month, our welfare rights website provides access to the most up to date welfare benefits and tax credits information on the web, including news, resources, discussion forums and jobs.
www.rightsnet.org.uk

Training – Our popular and accessible training courses cover all aspects of welfare rights advice. Our courses cover a wide range of subjects and are tailored to suit different levels.

www.rightsnet.org.uk/training

Review – Our comprehensive bi-monthly welfare benefits and tax credits publication.
www.lasa.org.uk/publications/review-magazine

Advice Line – Advice line for London based advice workers.

Tel: **020 7247 1735**.

Hours: Monday and Tuesdays 10.30–12:30am and Thursdays 2–4pm.

Welfare Rights Support Service – designed to help develop advisers' skills. The service includes training and support with complex casework and client representation at social security tribunals.

Tel: **020 7247 1735**.

Specialist Support Advice line – welfare rights advice help line for agencies in Wales who either hold the LSC unified contract, the LSC specialist quality mark, the LSC general help quality mark or, in respect of the categories of mental health public law, those holding a LSC general criminal law contract.

Tel: **0845 271 3230**.

Monday to Friday 10am–4pm.

Policy

We are an important second tier policy resource for advisers, and campaign to promote the role of the advice sector.

We also assist organisations in making the case for independent advice provision, and help to raise the profile of advice on strategic initiatives. We provide the latest information on developments in the advice sector via

www.rightsnet.org.uk/policy.shtml

ICT

Lasa is a recognised centre of excellence and innovation for support, information and advice in ICT developments for the voluntary sector, including:

ICT consultancy and healthchecks – for in-depth advice and practical support to help you use ICT to achieve your organisation’s goals.
www.lasa.org.uk/ict/consultancy

AIMS (Advice and Information Management Software) – our easy to use and cost-effective client and enquiry recording software.
Email us at aims@lasa.org.uk or call us on **020 7377 2806**.
www.lasa.org.uk/aims

Publications – for news, information and guidance on technology use in the voluntary sector, including ICT guides and Computanews.
www.lasa.org.uk/publications/ict-publications

Policy – we also influence policy on the effective use of ICT by the voluntary and community sector. To find out more please call **020 7377 2748**.

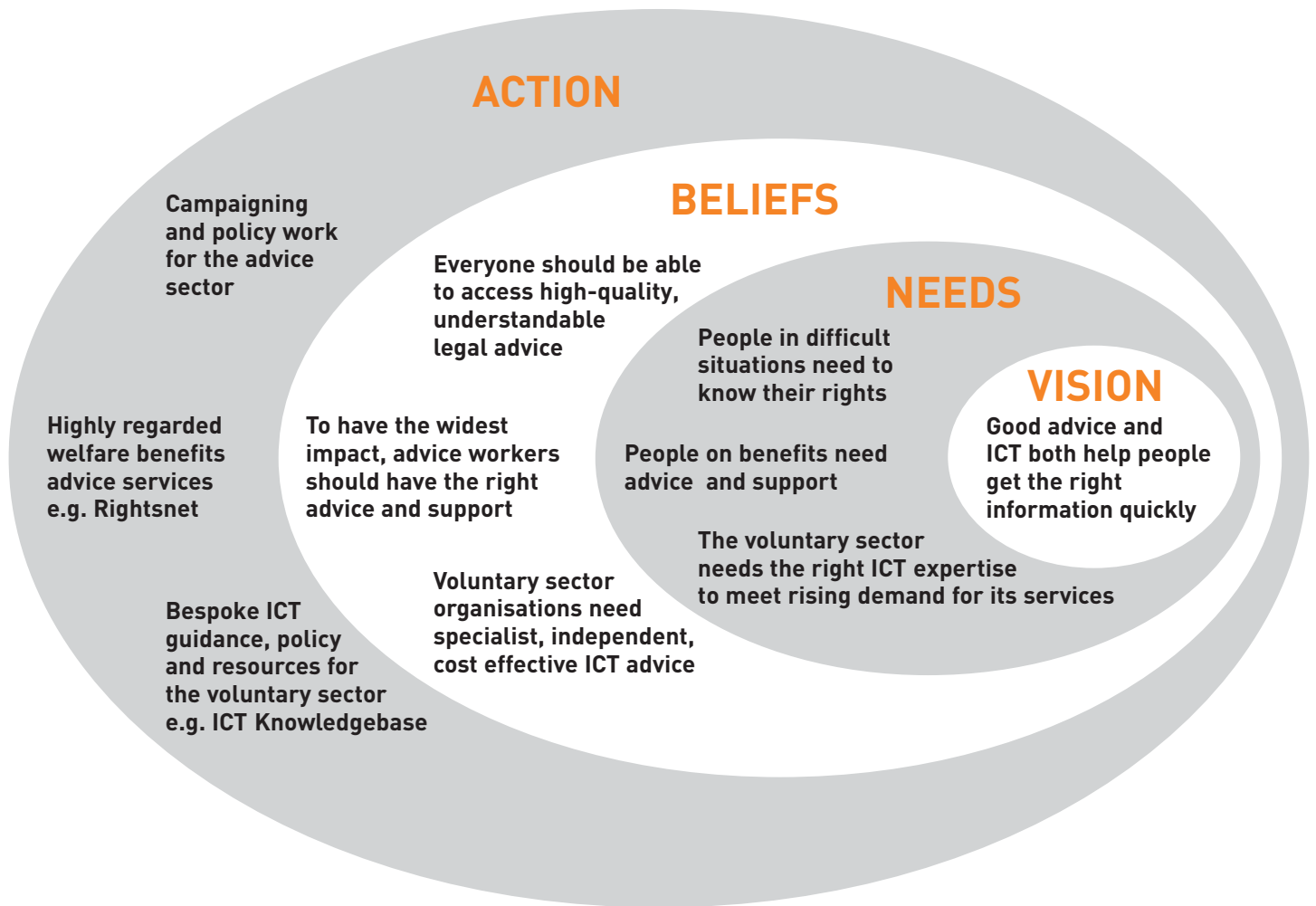
ICT knowledgebase – a free, comprehensive online resource of independent advice and information.

www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk

ICT suppliers directory – a free directory listing trusted suppliers of ICT goods and services for the voluntary and community sector.
www.suppliersdirectory.org.uk

Circuit riders – mobile workers who provide ICT support and strategic development to a caseload of small voluntary organisations. Lasa is the lead organisation for the UK circuit rider movement, and since 2000 we have led the development of circuit riding, running projects, international conferences, a range of seminars and training events.
<http://ukriders.lasa.org.uk>

Multikulti – Our award winning website provides information, advice, guidance and learning materials in community languages.
www.multikulti.org.uk



Good advice and ICT
both help people get the
right information quickly.

Our work has never
been needed more.

To find out how we can help you:

please email zamar@lasa.org.uk

or call 020 7377 2748.



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