
LONDON ADVICE SERVICES ALLIANCE COMPANY LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 MARCH 2009**

Company Number: 1794098

Company Information

Board of Trustees	John Blandford Nadine Clarkson Palomares Annette Figueiredo Jenny Keohane Paul Lowenberg Hugh Lyon Samantha Mauger Elizabeth Sewell
Chair	Elizabeth Sewell
Vice Chair	Hugh Lyon
Treasurer	John Blandford
Secretary	Andrew Gregg
Chief Executive	Andrew Gregg
Company Number	1794098
Charity Number	800140
Registered Office	Universal House 88-94 Wentworth Street London E1 7SA
Independent Auditors	Gotham Erskine LLP Chartered Accountants Friendly House 52-58 Tabernacle Street London EC2A 4NJ
Bankers	National Westminster Bank plc 130 Whitechapel High Street London E1 7PS

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ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

The Board of Trustees present the Annual Report and the financial statements of the London Advice Services Alliance Company Limited, Lasa, for the year ended 31 March 2009.

The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association and the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in March 2005. Lasa's trustees have complied with the duty in section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

The Trustees commend the staff for managing to maintain most of the key Lasa services despite a serious cut to funding from three major funders. At the same time Lasa has also managed to develop new initiatives and establish a platform from which we can hope to expand in the future. However, this process has not happened without significant loss of staff and resources. Throughout 2008 into early 2009 we were forced to make a number of redundancies throughout the organisation in particular with the complete loss of the Appeals Team and the restructuring of both our Directorate (from four Directors down to three) and our Administrative departments. The Trustees recognise that to have maintained all the other second and third tier services through such a downturn has been a significant achievement.

Principal activities

The objectives of the charity are:

To relieve poverty by promoting the provision of high quality independent advice for all and in particular:-

- a) to promote the development, improvement and co-ordination of legal and advice services and to encourage co-operation between agencies providing such services;
- b) to promote and assist in the introduction of information technology in charitable agencies;
- c) to carry out, commission and publish studies and research into the provision of legal advice and voluntary services and to develop policy responses to this research.

Lasa's mission and aims

Lasa's mission statement reads:

Lasa provides strategic and innovative services to support the provision of expert independent advice for all.

Lasa aims to see good advice available to all who need it and works to secure this by:

- Providing high quality support services to legal advice and information providers
- Promoting access to advice
- Promoting and developing new approaches to the use of ICT in voluntary and community organisations
- Being a source of good practice and innovation

Background

Lasa was established in 1984 to provide specialist support to advice and information providers. These services include advice, information and training in the field of information technology and welfare benefits support. In addition, Lasa undertakes policy work to promote the role of advice services with policy makers, central and regional government bodies and funders.

An independent organisation, Lasa provides services to organisations that include the main advice networks, national and regional organisations with an advice and information function, local community based organisations (especially those working with minority ethnic and refugee communities) as well as public

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sector organisations such as housing associations and local authorities. Lasa's work enables these organisations to benefit the public by providing better quality advice to ordinary people, which is free at the point of delivery.

Based in London, some of Lasa's services are primarily delivered in the London region but increasingly publications, websites, software, training and consultancy services are accessed by organisations throughout the UK.

In 2007-8, Lasa had an average of 32 staff (24 full time and 8 part-time) during the year. By the end of the financial period 2008-9 we had reduced this number to 21 staff through a mixture of natural wastage and redundancies. The staff continue to operate in specific teams and projects supported by the Finance and Central Services Teams who provide key administrative and financial support. We deleted the post of Director of Welfare Rights Support Services and brought all of the WRSS services together under the newly established Director of Services (Terry Stokes), with the exception of Lasa's training services which have been managed in the short term under the auspices of the Director of Finance & Resources (Kathleen Walsh) and with the very substantial input of Lasa's Marketing and Business Development Manager (Zoe Cumberland).

Governance issues

The affairs of Lasa are governed by the Board of Trustees who met five times during the reporting period. The Board ensures that there is an appropriate strategic plan and that this is being carried out effectively. The day to day management of the charity is delegated to staff through the Chief Executive and then to the three Executive Directors (Andy Gregg - Chief Executive, Terry Stokes - Director of Services and Kathleen Walsh - Director of Finance and Resources). In addition to the five board meetings and the AGM, there was also an Awayday which allowed the Board and the Directorate to revisit and review the mission of Lasa and also acted as a teambuilding exercise for the Board.

During the year Liz Sewell continued as Chair of the Board with Hugh Lyon as Vice Chair. John Blandford took over the role of Treasurer from Hugh Lyon in April 2008. Board membership was stable throughout the period with the eight trustees continuing to serve throughout the year. This stability has been important in providing good governance in difficult circumstances.

Trustees have to be nominated and seconded and their names are suggested to the Board following a skills audit, either through headhunting, individual contacts that trustees may have or advertisements where we need a particular skill set.

New trustees are given a detailed induction pack that includes all of the relevant policies and procedures, insurance and contracts that the Board are party to as well as a copy of the Memorandum and Articles of Association and other key documents. There is an annual awayday for the Board and new trustees are given a full induction (in a number of sessions) with the Chair and Directorate of Lasa. There are opportunities to meet relevant staff and contribute their expertise at all levels of the organisation.

As part of its regular discussions about the governance of Lasa, the Board continued its procedure for declaring and recording conflicts of interest. Regular risk analyses were carried out by the Board covering both financial and other risk areas for Lasa. In addition to regular Board meetings the Finance and Resources Sub Committee (consisting of the Chair, Treasurer and three other members of the Board) met three times in the year. During the year the Directorate met weekly while the Senior Management Team continued to meet monthly and Lasa continued its programme to support and develop its middle managers. A review of all Lasa's policies and procedures was completed with the assistance of an outside consultant. Work also commenced towards the Investors in People standard against which we will be assessed in October 2009.

In 2007-8 Lasa was able to make a significant contribution to its reserves and we designated sums to cover potential staffing reductions (£50,000) and the cost of our Marketing and Business Development Manager

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post (£50,000). We had anticipated correctly in during 2007/8 that the year ending March 2008 would be a very successful one financially whereas we were aware that the next year to March 2009 would involve significant cutbacks from some of our major funders. This pre-planning proved to be vital and has meant that the organization has been able to survive making a significant number of staff redundant as well as absorbing the costs of a significant restructuring. In future years we will need to rebuild our reserves in order to move towards our policy of holding three months running costs in reserve.

Overview of the work of Lasa in 2008-9

As anticipated, three major sources of funding significantly changed or came to an end in this financial period. These were:

- Support for our ICT work as part of the ICT Hub funded by Capacitybuilders
- London Councils' new commissioning approach
- the Legal Services Commission's new "unified contract" which made it impossible for us to continue providing a welfare rights tribunal and representation service without a sizeable and unsustainable level of subsidy from Lasa.

The ICT Hub monies came to an end in March 2008 and we spent much of the year lobbying and negotiating for some financial acknowledgement of the legacy of services which we had developed under Hub funding. At the latter end of the year we did receive financial acknowledgement of our continued provision of the ICT Knowledgebase and Suppliers Directory with a grant of £20,000 from Capacitybuilders via NAVCA, and a further grant of £8,000 to refresh Knowledgebase content in order to reflect the current economic downturn.

The change to London Councils' funding under their new commissioning approach took up a substantial amount of management and staff time during this period. We submitted bids for five commissioning areas and were successful in four of these (we were not funded for representation and tribunal work). This has meant that our total funding from London Councils has reduced from £321,000 per annum to £240,354 per annum. This is restricted income tied to the purposes set out in the detailed commission agreements.

The London Councils commissioning process also brought us into much more open competition with some of our stakeholders – we found ourselves bidding against Advice UK and the Law Centre's Federation for the Policy and Voice commission as well as against Superhighways for the ICT related work. Whilst we understand the need change in the method of distribution of London Councils' grant funding there are numerous problems emerging with the new commissioning approach. Our Chief Executive, Andy Gregg, stood successfully for election as Co-Chair of the Voluntary Sector Forum and this will enable us to raise some of those concerns at the highest level with London Councils' Officers and Members.

During the period it also became apparent that we would be unable to sustain our Legal Services Commission contract for casework under the terms of the new 'unified contract'. Work was discontinued during the autumn of 2008. For more detail see the later section under the Welfare Rights Support Services.

In 2007 we had anticipated all of these threats to our funding and recognised that we needed to generate more unrestricted income through sales of our products and services. We took the decision to invest in the establishment of a new Marketing and Business Development Manager post with a £50,000 designation from reserves. During the year we successfully secured part funding for the post with a grant of £50,000 over 18 months from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. We have spent substantial staff time and money boosting the marketing of our services, and our rightsnet training in particular has benefited from this approach. We have carried out a thorough review of our programme and in-house training courses. We have also held several seminars for staff on how to sell Lasa's services more effectively.

Despite the huge pressure on funding we have developed a number of new initiatives and have secured funding for these, including continuation funding for our 'Building Bridges to ICT Excellence' project from the City Bridge Trust, Cripplegate Foundation and Wates Foundation. We were also successful this year in securing funding from London Councils for our ICT services (though at a reduced rate), and for a new Advice

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and Appeals Representation Support project which will develop the representation skills at social security appeal tribunals of VCS advisers working with BAME, Refugee, Migrant and other socially-excluded communities. This new service will include an online discussion forum service, a telephone advice line, an 'Advisers' Appeals Forum' and specialist training courses.

We continue to be closely involved in the Voluntary Sector Forum of London Councils and have also contributed actively to their advice sector forum. Lasa works closely with all the advice networks as well as key agencies such as London Voluntary Services Council, Government Office for London, Advice Services Alliance, NAVCA and NCVO.

During the year we continued our involvement with the Change Up and Capacitybuilders programmes at all levels – national, London-wide, sub regional and borough levels. We are the lead agency in a project with London's Councils for Voluntary Service to develop plans to improve ICT infrastructure across London. We host the London ICT Champion. We chair the London Advice Forum and attend the London Regional Consortium of Change Up as well as actively contributing to the work of the ICT sub group.

Lasa campaigned actively in Parliament and elsewhere around Access to Justice and the continued effects of the Legal Service Commission's introduction in October 2007 of the unified contract. In addition to the problems that this has caused Lasa it is already having serious effects for London's not for profit advice sector which we have monitored closely through our policy development officer and regular meetings of the London Advice Forum.

Welfare Rights Support Services

Appeals representation

Since 1984, Lasa's Casework and Appeals Team provided free and expert representation at social security appeal tribunals and to the Commissioners for claimants referred by London advice agencies. The work of the Casework and Appeals Team was funded by a Contract from the Legal Services Commission (LSC) and it has also received grant funding from London Councils for many years. Both of these two sources became problematic during the period. London Councils rejected our application for continued funding in December 2007 and we then attempted to continue the services funded solely by the LSC. Hitherto the team comprised of four advisers but the level of funding available solely from the LSC could only sustain two full-time caseworkers and we had therefore to make two posts redundant during the early part of the year.

Despite valiant attempts to keep the service afloat it became clear as the year progressed that we were losing significant amounts of money subsidising the service and that we were not getting the mixture of short cases to compensate for the extensive hours that many of our cases required. Without such a favourable "case mix" it became increasingly clear that it would be impossible to make the contract break even. We therefore took the difficult decision to discontinue the work and make the remaining members of the team redundant during the autumn of 2008.

Rightsnet website

Rightsnet (www.rightsnet.org.uk) our welfare benefits and tax credits website for advisers includes an on-line discussion forum; daily news and analysis, caselaw summaries; leaflets, factsheets, benefit calculators, benefit rates and the latest advice-related job vacancies. Some parts of the website are accessible free while others are accessed via a password with a small annual subscription.

In May 2008 work was completed on a redesign of the site with improvements in response to user feedback.

Use of the website continued to increase, attracting more than 35 million hits, 993,000 visitor sessions and 7.4 million page views during the year. Users represent more than 4,000 advice organisations across the UK.

More than 800 articles were published to Rightsnet during the year, with summaries of and links (within 24

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hours of their issue) to new legislation, case law and court decisions, official guidance, and policy documents. Peer support was delivered through the discussion forums with more than 7,500 contributions posted by advice workers, viewed by others more than ½ million times.

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'.

During the year rightsnet also continued to support the work of Lasa's training team - with information on our training courses and online booking available via the site - and Lasa's policy team who publish the latest advice policy news and resources to the site.

Review

Six editions of Lasa's bi-monthly welfare rights 'Review' magazine were produced and each distributed to more than 2000 organisations in 2008/09. Review contains information and news to enable advisers to keep up to date with changes in welfare benefits and tax credits, and an annual benefit rates poster. Review is available for a small subscription.

Specialist Support Project

Since April 2008, our Legal Services Commission funded Specialist Support Service provided expert support and training for organisations with a unified LSC contract or a Quality Mark in welfare benefits based in Wales. The contract will run for a further two years to March 2011. We provide five telephone advice line sessions each week for advisers, 52 weeks of the year. Between April 08 and March 09 we worked with 58 organisations in Wales, assisted them on 277 different matters, and spent over 284 hours doing so. This service is free to advisors.

In addition this project will be a major contributor to our new Advice and Appeals Representation Support project which will develop the representation skills at social security appeal tribunals of VCS advisers working with BAME, Refugee, Migrant and other socially-excluded communities. This new service will include an online discussion forum service, a telephone advice line, an 'Advisers' Appeals Forum' and specialist training courses.

Welfare Benefits Training

The Advice and Training Team provided a comprehensive programme of affordable and accessible courses for organisations delivering welfare benefits advice. A new marketing campaign has successfully increased income from training courses to underpin the provision of the service.

In 2008-09 the team provided more than 70 courses in welfare benefits and tax credits ranging from the ever popular 'Welfare Benefits Overview' course aimed at advisers new to welfare benefits, courses on individual topics/subjects (e.g. housing benefit) through to specialised courses such as the 'Representation at Appeals' Course.

We have developed new advanced level courses on Disability Living Allowance and Overpayments to cater for experienced advice workers. Over 730 people attended Lasa programme courses and 51 in-house courses were arranged. Courses are adapted and updated throughout the year in line with changes in legislation and suggested changes and improvements. Lasa courses are promoted through the rightsnet website.

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ICT Support Services

Advice, consultancy, information and support

The Information Systems Team provides advice, information and support to help organisations make effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These services build the capacity of organisations to manage their ICT, and so enable them to deliver quality services.

Services include:

- telephone helpline
- consultancy and advice including ICT Healthchecks
- an on-line ICT information resource www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk
- an on-line searchable directory of suppliers of ICT services to the voluntary and community sector: www.suppliersdirectory.org.uk
- Quarterly magazine 'Computanews'
- Monthly ICT Bulletin
- 'Computanews guides' for in-depth coverage of key topics
- the promotion and development of the Circuit Rider model of voluntary sector ICT support.

Computanews is Lasa's non-technical guide to ICT focussing on the needs of Voluntary and Community Organisations. It continues to be a popular source of ICT information for the sector receiving positive feedback from our online readership surveys. 4 issues were published in 2008 and circulated to approximately 2,500 individuals and organisations free of charge.

Knowledgebase continues into its 10th year to provide a unique resource for small and medium-sized voluntary sector organisations to access relevant information on their ICT queries. This service is free of charge.

Over 350 articles are now published on the Knowledgebase website including 20 new articles and 96 revised / updated articles this year. Average visits per month in 2008 were over 23,000. The Discussion Forums have average visits per month of over 580.

The Suppliers Directory now has almost 120 entries with just under 230 services covering the whole of England. The directory has over 2,000 visitors per month.

Lasa Information Systems Team (IST) maintained its development of innovative support models to assist organisations in the management of their ICT. This included the promotion and development of the 'Circuit Rider Movement' in the UK - mobile ICT support workers who meet the needs of small to medium sized organisations. Work with NCVO, NAVCA and others to promote the movement is on-going. The Circuit Rider e-mail discussion forum continues to grow with over 400 participants to date. Lasa has widened the number and types of groups to whom we provide a Circuit Rider service as well as building the capacity of a larger number of organisations able to provide this service.

Our three year Big Lottery funded project to develop a training and accreditation framework to support and develop the skills of new and existing circuit riders in London is now underway. The standards framework has been developed and a website to support delivery of a personal learning environment is almost complete. Four meetings of the London Circuit Rider Network have now been held and will continue on a quarterly basis.

The team has also secured funding for the 'Building Bridges to ICT Excellence' Project. The project is working with the City Bridge Trust, Wates Foundation and Cripplegate Foundation to provide support to London voluntary and community groups on the ICT elements of their funding bids to the Trust and Foundations.

The team, in particular the London Regional ICT Champion, has continued to engage with funders and policy

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makers in both central and local government to promote good practice in the use of ICT for the voluntary sector, and to develop models that deliver effective ICT support for the sector. This has included working with Capacity Builders, the Greater London Assembly (through London Connects) and the Government Office for London. We have been active participants in the consultation and development of the strategy to best meet the ICT infrastructure needs of the voluntary and community sector. Our role in this work has been recognized by the securing of further part funding for the role of London ICT Champion for a further three years.

IST provides a one-to-one ICT advice service to voluntary organisations in London and nationally through our consultancy work and helpline. Over 70 telephone advice calls were delivered and we carried out significant pieces of consultancy work with over 20 organisations in London.

Although funding for the ICT Hub came to an end in June 2008 we continue to liaise closely with partner organisations NCVO, NAVCA, IT4C and AbilityNet to promote the importance of ICT to the voluntary and community sector and to secure further income to maintain and develop the resources Lasa developed under the partnership. Some further funding was secured towards the end of 2008 from Capacitybuilders to support the development of further resources on the Knowledgebase and Suppliers Directory. We also received sponsorship from Appichar towards the support of the Suppliers Directory.

AIMS Software

The Advice & Information Management System (AIMS) is a contact management database that can be configured to meet the needs of a wide range of organisations. The database is available in two formats (Core & Extra) and operates on both SQL and Access platforms. AIMS is currently in use in over 150 voluntary sector agencies and 19 metropolitan authorities and London boroughs.

The AIMS Team delivered 15 training sessions to 88 delegates over the period, as well as providing individual agencies with 10 in house consultancy visits. The teams' telephone support line dealt with 474 substantive enquiries, providing assistance on report design, classification issues and technical matters. The average call lasted 13 minutes. At the end of the period, in line with our marketing plan, we had 23 AIMS SQL users (up from 15 last year), using the more secure and robust database platform.

During the year AIMS brought out a free entry level version of the database that is available to download at http://www.lasa.org.uk/aims/aims_free_form.shtml. This development was intended to encourage good data collection even in the smallest of Voluntary and Community Sector groups enabling them to monitor and report on their impact.

As part of the marketing of AIMS we attended a number of conferences and workshops, presenting the software and discussing data collection issues in the voluntary sector. As well as the free version a downloadable demonstration version of the database is available from www.lasa.org.uk/aims/aims_demo.shtml

The Multikulti project

The Multikulti website provides a legacy of information on various areas of social welfare law translated into 12 community languages available 24/7 at www.multikulti.org.uk. All content is reviewed to ensure its relevance as there has been limited new content added to the site since the substantive funding for this work came to an end in the previous financial year. The website continued to receive more than 15 million hits and over 2 million visitors during the year.

During the year our experience of developing and delivering the Multikulti website was integral to our securing of EU funding for the BridgeIT project. Together with 25 organisations from 11 EU countries we will be looking at exemplars of good practice in the use of ICT to ensure the integration and active citizenship of people arriving from outside the EU. Multikulti will form one of the case studies.

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Policy Development

Six meetings of the London Advice Forum (LAF) were facilitated during the year together with the development of terms of reference and a Forum work programme. The profile of the Forum has been raised significantly over the last 12 months and is increasingly recognised as a key body to consult on issues affecting advice provision across London. Lasa's policy function allows us to maintain an influential role in London advice sector developments with policy makers, regional & central government, and funders. We continue to play a central role in the development of legal advice services across London through our partnership work with the other major advice networks and organisations. We also engage with prominent London funders including London Councils, Big Lottery Fund, the Baring Foundation, City Parochial Foundation, London Funders and by way of involvement with the Voluntary Sector Forum, MPs, MEPs, Greater London Authority (GLA) etc.

We have organised meetings for LAF with London Funders, London MPs, the GLA and the Mayor's Office and have spoken at London Councils advice sector meetings. We contributed to the planning and presentation of London Council's legal advice sectoral forum on two occasions. Lasa's Policy Officer responded to over 100 telephone and over 40 mail requests for information and advice around legal advice services.

During the year we developed the advice policy news area of our rightsnet policy website, and continued to support an online discussion forum with funding from the City Parochial Foundation. We maintain close links with Advice UK policy and development staff, Age Concern London, Youth Access, Citizens Advice London and the Law Centres Federation. Lasa is involved in many of the developments around legal advice provision within London through dialogue with partner networks and associated initiatives and events. The policy website area is proving to be a valuable resource in spreading information relevant to advice agencies in a timely and accessible format.

Lasa responds to all regional and central government consultations on issues affecting advice and legal services. In the year we coordinated responses to the London Council's commissioning process, and to the London Councils and Big Lottery Fund consultations. We also attended a wide variety of meetings, seminars and presentations at, for example, Government Office for London (GOL), London Development Agency (LDA), Capacitybuilders, Age Concern, London Voluntary Service Council, ACEVO and NCVO. We have raised advice related issues with GOL, LDA, GLA, the London Mayors Office, London Funders, LSC, and the Law Society.

Lasa has had a considerable involvement with the Voluntary Sector Forum which allows us a real input into London Council's policies and procedures. Our Chief Executive Andy Gregg is now the Co-Chair of the Voluntary Sector Forum. He is also involved in the Third Sector Alliance which is funded by the Government to express the views of the VCS in London to national and local government. In particular we have been closely involved in consultations on the progress of London Council's new commissioning process which has caused significant problems and concerns for Lasa as well as the wider advice and voluntary sector.

Financial review

2008/9 saw the end of three major funding streams. The difficulties this entailed had been foreseen in 2007/8 and £100,000 of reserves had been designated to cover the costs.

Lasa had net outgoing resources on unrestricted funds, a deficit, of £131,236 for the year, before the transfer of £100,000 from designated funds. After the transfer from designated funds, which was planned in 2007/8, the deficit for the year was £31,236. Together with the accumulated surplus brought forward from previous years, Lasa now has an accumulated surplus of £116,508 (2008 £247,744) on unrestricted funds.

Restricted funds carried forward at 31 March 2009 amounted to £59,049 (2008 £562). These are funds that have been received for restricted projects including ICT infrastructure, the circuit rider project, and business development and is sufficient to complete those activities for which the funds were provided.

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The trustees are pleased to report that Lasa's fundraisers have already secured 87% of its 2009/2010 grant funding, 77% for 2010/2011 and 47% for 2011/2012.

Principal funding sources

Lasa generates fee income from the services provided to front line advice organisations and from government organisations. These services are enhanced by the receipt of grants. Grants for the year, amounting to 56% (2008 59%) of the total income, were received from the Association of London Government, The Big Lottery Fund, the City Bridge Trust, the City Parochial Foundation, the Cripplegate Foundation, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the European Social Fund, the London Legal Support Trust, the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the Wates Foundation.

Investment Policy

Aside from retaining a prudent amount in reserves each year most of the charity's funds are to be spent in the short term so there are no funds for long term investment. The policy of the Board of Trustees is to invest the amount that it has available and grants received in advance on the money market.

Reserves Policy

The Board of Trustees has examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby funds used for core Lasa projects and not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should be 3 months expenditure. This gives a target of around £225,000 in general funds. The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Board of Trustees are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in core funding. The present level of reserves available to the charity of £116,328 therefore falls short of this target level. This figure is the unrestricted reserves £116,508 less the unrestricted fixed assets £180.

Although the strategy is to continue to build reserves through planned operating surpluses, the Board of Trustees is well aware that it is unlikely that the target range can be reached for at least five years. In the short term the Board of Trustees has also considered the extent to which existing activities and expenditure could be curtailed, should such circumstances arise.

Risk assessment

In June 2002 the Board of Trustees agreed a risk management strategy which comprises:

- an annual review of the risks which the charity may face
- the establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate against risks identified; and
- the implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

A review of the plan is carried out annually.

Company status

London Advice Services Alliance Company Limited (Lasa) is a company limited by guarantee governed by its memorandum and articles of association. It is registered at Companies House under the number 1794098. The Charity Commissioners have registered the company as a charity under the number 800140.

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Board of Trustees

The members of the Board perform the role of directors in company law and are the trustees in charity law. Those who served during the year were :

John Blandford
Nadine Clarkson Palomares
Annette Figueiredo
Jenny Keohane

Paul Lowenberg
Hugh Lyon
Samantha Mauger
Elizabeth Sewell

Membership of the Board of Trustees is open to:

- a) not more than sixteen persons nominated by the members of the Company to serve on the Board by virtue of their direct experience of advice work or their particular skills, experience or other such qualification; and
- b) not more than 2 people co-opted by the Board of Trustees.

Each Board Member has one vote and the Chair has a second casting vote.

Statement of the Board of Trustees responsibilities

Company law requires the Board of Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Board of Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The Board of Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 1985. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In determining how amounts are presented within items in the Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet the Board of Trustees have had regard to the substance of the reported transaction or arrangement, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or practice.

So far as the Board of Trustees are aware at the time the report is approved:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware, and
- the Board of Trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Independent auditors

The independent auditors, Gotham Erskine LLP, will be proposed for reappointment.

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Small company exemptions

The board of directors have taken advantage of the exemptions conferred by the special provisions of Part V11 of the Companies Act 1985 relating to small companies.

This report was approved by the Board of Trustees on 23 June 2009 and signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees by:

Liz Sewell
Chair

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF LONDON ADVICE SERVICES ALLIANCE COMPANY LIMITED

We have audited the financial statements of London Advice Services Alliance Company Limited for the year ended 31 March 2009 set out on pages 14 to 26. These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, the Statement of Recommended Practice Accounting and Reporting by Charities issued in February 2005, the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Enterprises (FRSSE) effective January 2007 and the accounting policies set out on pages 17 to 18.

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with Section 235 of the Companies Act 1985. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and independent auditors

As described in the Statement of Trustees Responsibilities the company's Board of Trustees is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom generally accepted accounting practice.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the trustees report is not consistent with the financial statements, the company has not kept proper accounting records, if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit, or if information specified by law regarding trustees remuneration and transactions with the company is not disclosed.

We read the Trustees' Annual Report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies within the financial statements.

Basis of audit opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Board of Trustees in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF LONDON ADVICE SERVICES ALLIANCE
COMPANY LIMITED

Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2009 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. The information given in the trustees report is consistent with the financial statements.

Gotham Erskine LLP

Chartered Accountants
and Registered Auditors
Friendly House
52-58 Tabernacle Street
London EC2A 4NJ

23 June 2009

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
For the year ended 31 March 2009

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2009 £	Total Funds 2008 £
Incoming Resources					
Incoming resources from generated funds					
Voluntary income		350	-	350	-
Investment income		9,638	-	9,638	15,271
Incoming resources from charitable activities	2	789,255	471,247	1,260,502	1,684,154
Total Incoming Resources		799,243	471,247	1,270,490	1,699,425
Resources Expended					
Charitable activities	4	878,803	444,271	1,323,074	1,927,466
Governance	6	20,165	-	20,165	21,165
Total Resources Expended		898,968	444,271	1,343,239	1,948,631
Net Incoming/(Outgoing)					
Resources before transfers		(99,725)	26,976	(72,749)	(249,206)
Transfers between funds	1,15	(31,511)	31,511	-	-
Net Incoming/(Outgoing) Resources		(131,236)	58,487	(72,749)	(249,206)
Net income for the year		(131,236)	58,487	(72,749)	(249,206)
Total fund balances brought forward at 1 April 2008		247,744	562	248,306	497,512
Total fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2009		£ 116,508	£ 59,049	£ 175,557	£ 248,306

The balance on restricted funds represents the amount of funds available for specific projects or activities which were not finished at the year end. These funds are therefore necessary to complete the project or activity in the next year and are not a surplus available to the charity for other purposes. A condition of funding these projects or activities is that if the project was not completed for any reason the remaining funds are required to be repaid to the donor or grantor.

The statement of financial activities incorporates the income and expenditure account and includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

The notes on pages 17 to 26 form part of these financial statements.

LONDON ADVICE SERVICES ALLIANCE COMPANY LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET
As at 31 March 2009

	Note	£	2009 £	£	2008 £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible fixed assets	10		180		3,160
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	11	206,011		176,752	
Cash at bank and in hand		156,254		285,004	
		362,265		461,756	
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	12	(108,796)		(137,848)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			253,469		323,908
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			253,649		327,068
DEFERRED INCOME	13		(78,092)		(78,762)
NET ASSETS			£ 175,557		£ 248,306
FUNDS					
Unrestricted funds					
General			116,508		147,744
Designated			-		100,000
			116,508		247,744
Restricted funds			59,049		562
	14, 15		£ 175,557		£ 248,306

The notes on pages 17 to 26 form part of these financial statements.

BALANCE SHEET
As at 31 March 2009

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part VII of the Companies Act 1985 relating to small companies and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective January 2007).

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Trustees on 23 June 2009 and signed on its behalf by:

Liz Sewell
Chair

John Blandford
Treasurer

The notes on pages 17 to 26 form part of these financial statements.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

A summary of the principal accounting policies, all of which have been applied consistently throughout the year and with the preceding year, is set out below.

1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention, in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) issued in February 2005, the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Enterprises (FRSSE) effective January 2007 and the Companies Act 1985. The financial statements include the results of the company's operations which are described in the Annual Report and all of which are continuing.

The company has taken advantage of the exemption in Financial Reporting Standard No.1 from the requirement to produce a cash flow statement on the grounds that it is a small company.

1.2 Incoming resources

Voluntary income is donations. They are recognised where there is entitlement, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Investment income is recognised on a receivable basis.

Income from charitable activities includes income received under contracts for the provision of services and grant funding which is subject to specific performance conditions. Income from the provision of services is recognised as earned as the related services are provided and is stated after discounts and net of Vat. Grant income included in this category is recognised where there is entitlement, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability. It is only deferred when:

- The donor or grantor specifies that the donation or grant is to be used in future accounting periods, or
- The donor or grantor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement to its receipt.

Deferred income includes training fees and subscription income received in advance of the training taking place or the subscription being used.

Grants received for services and activities which are not completed at the year end are included in income at the full amount and the unused portion is carried forward in net incoming resources at the end of the year.

1.3 Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised when a liability is incurred. Contractual arrangements and performance related grants are recognised as goods or services are supplied.

- Charitable activities include expenditure associated with specialised advice, advocacy, training and ICT support services and include both the direct and support costs relating to these activities.
- Governance costs include the cost of the preparation and audit/examination of the statutory accounts, the costs of trustees meetings and the cost of any legal advice to trustees on governance or constitutional matters.
- Support costs include central functions and have been allocated to activity cost categories on the basis of staff involved in the activity.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES\continued

1.4 Irrecoverable VAT

All resources expended are classified under activity headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resources expended for which it was incurred.

1.5 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets with a value of £1,500 or more are capitalised at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Office equipment	-	33%	Straight line
Fixtures & fittings	-	33%	Straight line

1.6 Operating leases

Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities as incurred on a straight line basis.

1.7 Funds structure

The charity has a number of restricted income funds to account for situations where a donor requires that a donation must be spent on a particular purpose or where funds have been raised for a specific purpose.

All other funds are unrestricted income funds. The trustees intended to use part of the unrestricted funds to cover redundancy, maternity and long-term staff sickness and to cover business development and had set up designated funds to reflect this. The funds held in each of these categories are disclosed in note 14.

1.8 Pensions

The company has a defined contribution pension scheme. The company contributes 3% of gross salary to the scheme or to the employee's personal pension scheme. The charge to the Statement of Financial Activities represents the amounts payable to the funds during the year.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

2. INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Grants	Other income	Total Funds 2009	Total Funds 2008
	£	£	£	£
Welfare rights support services	173,932	268,381	442,313	671,478
Policy and development	107,253	138,639	245,892	198,119
ICT services	427,589	144,708	572,297	814,557
	<u>£ 708,774</u>	<u>£ 551,728</u>	<u>£ 1,260,502</u>	<u>£ 1,684,154</u>

Incoming resources above and total resources expended in note 4 include both restricted and unrestricted income and expenditure. Incoming and outgoing resources for restricted funds in note 14 only includes restricted income and expenditure.

Other income includes income from commissions, training courses, publications, and the sale of software licences.

LONDON ADVICE SERVICES ALLIANCE COMPANY LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

3. GRANTS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2009	Total Funds 2008
	£	£	£	£
<u>Receivable in year</u>				
Association of London Government				
Revenue	207,377	100,182	307,559	321,000
Big Lottery Fund				
Circuit rider accreditation	-	118,978	118,978	
MultiKulti	-	-	-	79,785
Active Community Unit				
Capacity builders	-	-	-	26,011
ICT hub	-	-	-	368,989
European Social Fund				
EASI	-	2,226	2,226	81,301
PRESTO	-	-	-	87,612
SIED	30,000	1,533	31,533	-
The City Bridge Trust	-	68,750	68,750	-
City Parochial Foundation	-	17,850	17,850	-
Cripplegate Foundation	-	8,528	8,528	-
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	33,000	33,000	-
HBOS Foundation	-	-	-	2,000
HM Revenue and Customs	-	-	-	30,000
The London Legal Support Trust	-	11,250	11,250	-
National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)	-	55,500	55,500	-
National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)	-	56,250	56,250	-
The Wates Foundation	-	15,000	15,000	-
Other	150	-	150	5,600
	<u>£ 237,527</u>	<u>£ 489,047</u>	<u>£ 726,574</u>	<u>£ 1,002,298</u>
<u>Deferred grants</u>				
Brought forward from previous year				
Home Office	-	-	-	3,000
Mercer's Company	-	-	-	4,000
Other	-	-	-	1,600
	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ 8,600</u>
Carried forward to next year				
The City Bridge Trust	-	13,750	13,750	-
City Parochial Foundation	-	4,050	4,050	-
	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ 17,800</u>	<u>£ 17,800</u>	<u>£ -</u>
Net deferred grants	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ (17,800)</u>	<u>£ (17,800)</u>	<u>£ 8,600</u>
Total for the year	<u>£ 237,527</u>	<u>£ 471,247</u>	<u>£ 708,774</u>	<u>£ 1,010,898</u>

LONDON ADVICE SERVICES ALLIANCE COMPANY LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

4. RESOURCES EXPENDED ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Fees and staff costs	Other direct costs	Support costs	Total Funds 2009	Total Funds 2008
	£	£	£	£	£
Welfare rights support services	332,380	23,639	163,510	519,529	635,166
Policy and development	158,593	7,026	78,471	244,090	190,418
ICT services	365,143	17,640	176,672	559,455	1,101,882
	<u>£ 856,116</u>	<u>£ 48,305</u>	<u>£ 418,653</u>	<u>£ 1,323,074</u>	<u>£ 1,927,466</u>

5. SUPPORT COSTS

	Staffing costs	IT, administration and premises	Total Funds 2009	Total Funds 2008
	£	£	£	£
Welfare rights support services	113,087	47,794	160,881	156,593
Policy and development	53,854	22,761	76,615	46,359
ICT services	127,340	53,817	181,157	240,734
	<u>£ 294,281</u>	<u>£ 124,372</u>	<u>£ 418,653</u>	<u>£ 443,686</u>

Support costs are allocated to the projects or activity on the basis of staff and consultants involved in the projects or activity.

6. GOVERNANCE OF THE CHARITY

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2009	Total Funds 2008
	£	£	£	£
Salaries and other staffing costs	8,395	-	8,395	8,395
Auditors' remuneration	4,750	-	4,750	4,750
Accountancy	6,750	-	6,750	7,750
Subsistence	206	-	206	206
Postage	64	-	64	64
	<u>£ 20,165</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ 20,165</u>	<u>£ 21,165</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

7. NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES

Net incoming/(outgoing) resources is stated after charging:

	2009	2008
	£	£
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets		
- owned by the company	2,167	40,857
Deficit on disposal of fixed assets	812	-
Auditors' remuneration		
- for audit services	4,750	4,750
- for other services	6,750	18,851
Operating lease rentals		
- land and buildings	89,286	92,385
	2009	2008

No member of the Board of Trustees received any emoluments. Out of pocket expenses reimbursed were less than £100 (2008 - £100). No employee received emoluments of £60,000 per annum or more.

8. STAFF COSTS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2009	2008
	£	£
Wages and salaries	827,337	1,067,915
Social security costs	86,308	113,125
Pension costs	23,602	28,355
	£ 937,247	£ 1,209,395

The average monthly number of full-time equivalent employees during the year was as follows:

	2009	2008
Service delivery	21	28
Administration	3	4
	2009	2008

9. TAXATION

As a charity, the London Advice Services Alliance Company Limited is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

10. TANGIBLE ASSETS

	Office Equipment £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 April 2008	179,988	2,835	182,823
Disposals	(112,379)	(2,835)	(115,214)
At 31 March 2009	<u>67,609</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>67,609</u>
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2008	176,828	2,835	179,663
Charge for year	2,167	-	2,167
On disposals	(111,566)	(2,835)	(114,401)
At 31 March 2009	<u>67,429</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>67,429</u>
Net Book Value			
At 31 March 2009	<u>£ 180</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ 180</u>
At 31 March 2008	<u>£ 3,160</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ 3,160</u>

11. DEBTORS

	2009 £	2008 £
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	115,319	58,315
Other debtors	4,368	13,874
Prepayments	12,355	12,239
Grants in arrears	73,969	92,324
	<u>£ 206,011</u>	<u>£ 176,752</u>

12. CREDITORS:

Amounts falling due within one year

	2009 £	2008 £
Trade creditors	25,402	116,696
Social security and other taxes	4,454	-
Other creditors	64,940	6,377
Accruals	14,000	14,775
	<u>£ 108,796</u>	<u>£ 137,848</u>

Included in other creditors is an amount of £143 in respect of pension contributions. (2008 £406).

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

13. DEFERRED INCOME

	2009	2008
	£	£
At 1 April 2008	78,762	84,195
Less amount released to incoming resources	78,762	84,195
Plus amount deferred in the year	(78,092)	(78,762)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
At 31 March 2009	£ 78,092	£ 78,762
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Deferred income represents grants, subscription and training income received for future periods.

14. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	At 1 April 2008	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	At 31 March 2009
	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	147,744	799,243	(798,968)	(31,511)	116,508
Designated funds					
Business development	50,000	-	(50,000)	-	-
Staff costs	50,000	-	(50,000)	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total unrestricted funds	247,744	799,243	(898,968)	(31,511)	116,508
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Restricted funds					
Welfare rights support services	562	82,584	(89,907)	31,511	24,750
Policy and development	-	67,315	(67,315)	-	-
Circuit Rider					
- accreditation	-	118,978	(100,642)	-	18,336
- project	-	78,528	(62,565)	-	15,963
ICT champion	-	27,000	(27,000)	-	-
ICT general	-	8,333	(8,333)	-	-
ICT hub	-	84,750	(84,750)	-	-
Multikulti	-	3,759	(3,759)	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total restricted funds	562	471,247	(444,271)	31,511	59,049
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total funds	248,306	1,270,490	(1,343,239)	-	175,557
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Incoming resources for restricted funds in note 15 only includes restricted income. Incoming resources in note 2 and total resources expended in note 4 include both restricted and unrestricted income and expenditure.

Designated funds

Staff costs

£50,000 was designated for staff costs such as redundancy, maternity and long term sickness. This was used during the year.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

14. STATEMENT OF FUNDS\continued

Business development

£50,000 was designated for business development. This was transferred to restricted funds and used during the year to underpin the new business development manager post and on costs before grant funding started.

Restricted funds

Welfare Rights Support Services

Restricted funds are received for particular activities within the Appeals team, particularly to run the Appeals Forum.

ICT support Services

Undertakes specific projects and activities which receive restrictive funding. These include activities within the Circuit Rider project, the ICT hub, ICT champion and MultiKulti projects.

Policy and development

Restricted funds are received towards the policy officer's salary and investigating the infrastructure support needs of London advice agencies.

15. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2009
	£	£	£
Fund balances at 31 March 2009 are represented by			
Tangible fixed assets	180	-	180
Current assets	279,749	82,516	362,265
Current liabilities	(103,129)	(5,667)	(108,796)
Deferred income	(60,292)	(17,800)	(78,092)
	£ 116,508	£ 59,049	£ 175,557
	£ 116,508	£ 59,049	£ 175,557

16. OTHER COMMITMENTS

At 31 March 2009 the company had annual commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	Land and buildings		Other	
	2009	2008	2009	2008
	£	£	£	£
Expiry date:				
Within 1 year	-	96,600	440	440
Between 2 and 5 years	48,300	-	-	-
	48,300	96,600	440	440
	48,300	96,600	440	440

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2009

17. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

At the end of the year there were no other capital commitments, contingent liabilities or other financial commitments for which full provision has not been made in these financial statements (2008 £Nil).