

**London Legal Support Trust –
London Specialist Advice Forum meeting**

2-4pm Wednesday 24th May 2023

Chair: Stephen Cutter, Release

This document contains detailed notes from May's London Specialist Advice Forum meeting.

They are divided by headings so you can skip to the part most relevant to you. There is also a full recording of the Forum session available [here](#).

Full notes are below, you can jump to each segment using the links here:

1. [Kate Hitchcock, John Ellerman Foundation: Information on Social Action Grants](#)
2. [Luke Robins-Grace, Public Law Project: Campaign Overview followed by Q&A and discussion](#)
3. [Jackson Caines, Harrow Law Centre: Presentation on Housing and Campaigns project](#)
4. [London Legal Support Trust- AOB](#)

1. [Kate Hitchcock, John Ellerman Foundation: Information on Social Action Grants](#)

Slides are available [here](#)

a) Background to the Foundation:

- Founded in the 1970s by John Ellerman, the foundation is currently trying to identify the roots of its wealth, and the implications it would have for wider practice. You can read the historical review of the organisation [here](#).
- The [2022-2025 strategy](#) has also been launched meaning key priorities have been set for the next 5 years so now is a good time to apply for grants.

b) Our grant making:

- What we are trying to achieve with our grant making is advancing the wellbeing of people, society, and the natural world.
- To achieve that vision, we have three different main funding categories: *Arts, Environment, and Social Action*.
- We support UK registered charities with an income between £100,000 and £10m, and we mainly like to fund core funding, and have distributed about £6m last year.

c) Social Action Grants

- Our Social Action grants make up to a quarter of our grant making, and we have *three* key criteria for that:
 - i) **National significance**
 - The main point is that you have a UK wide or national reach

- It doesn't necessarily have to mean that you are delivering all over the country- it is more about how you are having an impact on practice, impact, campaign, and policies.

ii) Actively involving those with direct experiences

- The next aspect we are looking at is actively involving those with direct experience of an issue.
- For us, it is important that those with lived experience are valued for their expertise, and their insights of the work.
- We value learned, professional, and personal experiences.
- We are also focussed on accountability within our own work too, and we are currently doing a lot of work on EDI and we have an accountability plan that we will publish shortly.

iii) Improving systems or often known as system change (Systems change)

- This is about creating an inclusive society where everyone can thrive, and improve
- Improving systems also includes sharing, and expanding successful stories/initiatives, influencing policy makers and more public campaigning.

d) What we support

- In terms of what we support we provide core funding support and see it as an investment in an organisation and their structures.
- We recommend applying for grants around £10,000-£50,000 per year, and grants length are normally 3 years.
- We are both flexible and responsive for any needs so if you need short term grants you can always contact us.

e) Examples of grants

- **Birthrights:** Funded towards core costs including staff salaries to support the next phase of their race inquiry
- **Children England:** Funded towards core costs to support the young leader's programme.
- **Rainbow Migration:** Towards core costs of their policy and campaigning work in support of LGBTQI people seeking asylum.

f) Pre-application support

- Further information can be found [here](#), and support includes [eligibility quiz](#), [funding guidelines and FAQs](#), telephone chats and draft reviews.

g) How to apply

- [Apply via the online portal](#).
- Fill in the short form and attach a two-page proposal as well as financial information.

- The application process is tailored to what organisations need and want.

h) Application process

- After the eligibility checks; we go through sifting by reading the first stage application, and if you are successful at that point, you can get invited to submit a detailed application, followed by a trustee visit.
- You can find the timeline of the application process [here](#).
- You can find all our contact details [here](#).

Q&A

- *Q: Can I ask about the difference about applying for a 2-year grant instead of 3 years? We are hoping to get grants from the MOJ next week for 21 months and we were wondering once we are sifted by you, we can get the core costs we need. The question is whether you want our draft to say what we would like for the 18 months or whether you prefer us to tell you what you would like per month.*

We would like you to come to us with an idea on how long you would like to us to fund you for and for how much. Although most of our grants are 2-3 years, we have made grants for 18 months as it is part of our flexible and responsive model. It would be good if you come with a number and what you would use it for.

- *Q: If we want funding for 18 months, should we reduce your £100k guideline in half?*
Yes, as it would need to be proportionate with the guidelines. £50k is the larger side of the grant for us.
- *Q: Do you encourage partnership working if it enhances national reach?*
We encourage partnership work and look favourably at it; it doesn't happen that often as we consider our funding as an investment with an organisation, but it is certainly something we are open to. The size of grants may make it difficult to have a meaningful partnership which is well resourced.

2. Luke Robins-Grace, Public Law Project: Campaigns Overview followed by Q&A and discussion

Slides are available [here](#)

a) Introduction

- This session is pitched at front line organisations who are interested in campaigning.
- A lot of organisations are firefighting in the frontline to change policy and behaviour on the part of authorities.
- This session is focussed at providing organisations with the tools needed to develop an effective campaign.

b) What is a campaign?

- Ultimately, it is about influencing policy or action by decision makers. Even organisations that don't have campaigning as their core purpose still do campaign work.

- Campaign activity ultimately gets specific people to change their mind on specific things. This could be something like a campaign directed at the general public or in our case public authorities or political decision makers.
- Campaigns also don't have to be big or flashy, it could be something specific such as a local authority's actions or specific policy issues.
- Campaigning is about influence (*lost art of persuasion*) it is about engaging emotions and inspiring change.

c) Audience and Purpose

- The first thing you need to consider is your audience and purpose, this goes for any campaign big or small.
- When thinking about your audience/purpose, these are the main questions to ask: What is the change you want to see? Who has the power and authority to make that change and what can you say to them that will make them do something.

d) Theory of change

- A theory of change confirms the aims of your campaigns.
- A quick theory of change might include the following: "*MPs just need to understand X, then they will act.*"

e) Four campaign tools

- If you want to think about doing a campaign, these are the four tools you need: *framing, messaging, top line and call to action*.
- **Framing:** Framing is about how you see issues, e.g., tax you often see as a burden, but you can reframe it and make tax about national infrastructure, or you could say that tax is about national insurance. Framing is about talking about the same thing but in a different perspective.
- **Messaging:** It is useful to outline what your messaging is at an early stage. This is the big picture that underpins your communication and can include in your general communications.
- Messaging is like giving an elevator pitch and it useful to structure your messaging in these following ways; you start off with the *value* of the problem, you state what the *problem* is, you tell people your *vision* and then you have a *call to action*
- **Top line:** Top line is something that is relevant to media and social media. The top line is the first thing you say in a media interview, and you can use it in a variety of different contexts.
- The purpose of the top line is to get people interested in what it is you are exactly doing and get people's interest.
- **Call to action:** Call to action is the fourth tool and the point of the call to action is that it shows the audience that it is not all hopeless and the audience can get involved. It involves inviting the audience to be part of the solution and this can engage them.

f) Impact: Comms 101

- To have the best impact in your campaign is to make it accessible and simple as possible for the audience. This means having fewer words and making sure what you are saying is clear.

g) Q&A

- *Q: Do you have hints and tips in managing any tensions of a campaign. For example, with the legal migration bill and the idea of putting people on boats. What is the framing around it and do tensions exist around that?*

With the migration bill, the tensions are different as you are trying to find which strategy works best. Do you get parliamentarians to reject the bill or is there a pragmatic approach in trying to get the bill amended? At PLP we have landed on the framing that the bill should be stopped as it is fundamentally inhumane and cruel.

- *Q: Most of the people we support in our advice agency are facing issues caused by what the law says. Are we likely to have positive reform in immigration law or do we need to think about the future working more with opposition?*

My guess is as good as anyone in terms of what the future would hold if one came. I think immigration is a tricky one as there are organisations who believe that there should be fewer immigration controls, others believe that immigration is fuelled by structural racism and the mainstream frame is immigration is alright and we should control it. There is a massive framing challenge with different voices.

- *Q: On your early point influencing MPs, the difficulty with the immigration sphere is not so much about what MPs think but more about whether they are going to win an election. You are then left with; how do I influence them with anything other than what the public opinion is and that has great sway at the moment. I was wondering what your thoughts are?*

I think the point about campaigns is that they can operate at so many different levels and that's why you get public awareness campaigns. Taking the immigration case, the reason the government is saying this is because they think it might be thinking it is a vote winner or they can make it a vote winner.

3. Jackson Caines, Harrow Law Centre: Presentation on Housing and Campaigns project

a) Introduction

- If you are aware of Law Centres you might be surprised to see a local campaigner at a Law Centre. For most Law Centres, the bulk of their work is legal aid lawyers providing free legal advice to residents on core issues such as housing, immigration and welfare benefits.
- This new role is the brainchild of our director, who has been active in the community in fixing the cause of the problems for years.
- My background is a housing officer in local authority and also getting involved in housing activism, very much inspired by groups such as [London Renter's Union](#) and [ACORN](#).

b) Campaigns work at Harrow

- Through my role I encourage tenants to consider the benefits of a collective approach to finding solutions to their problems.
- This includes using a range of tactics available to them other than legal tactics to seek solutions to housing issues.

c) Examples of Campaigns in Harrow: Social Housing

- The first campaign in Harrow was with the Housing Association block called Trident block that was recently built.
- Through our interaction with people on our block we heard that there were ongoing repair issues with the two lifts that residents use. The lift was not fit for purpose affecting the quality of life of vulnerable residents.
- For 10 years, many of these social tenants have been complaining to their social landlord going through their complaints system and they were getting ignored.
- Our campaign started with taking a grassroots approach with this, forming relationships with residents, hearing from other tenants, getting the tenants in a WhatsApp group and holding zoom meetings.
- The tenants then put together a public statement demanding change to their housing conditions. That statement went public on a dedicated twitter account and went out to the local press. This was very effective as the social landlords were forced to pay attention and meet the tenants as even the local MP got involved.
- The outcome was that senior representatives from the housing association met with the tenants to address issues. On the issues with the lifts after 10 years of no progress they have said that they are not just temporary but fully repaired.
- Now that the structures are in place with the resident group, they have that collective weight to face their landlord and seek a solution to their housing.

d) Examples of Campaigns in Harrow: Private rented sector

- One block we were made aware of as someone went to their local Citizens' Advice complaining about damp and mould in their flat.
- We visited the block which was an office block that was changed to residential, and it was obvious there were massive health implications with many children using inhalers and respiratory issues.
- We worked with a local health charity to assess the children living in those residential areas and help us write an authoritative letter to all the councillors saying you are not doing your job on regulating the private rent sector.
- Thanks, from the pressure of Harrow Law Centre and MEDCAT, the council officer inspected the block, and we scrutinised their inspection.
- We also got our judicial review pre-action written to the council to issue the improvement notes.
- This block is a particular case study but highlights the inadequacies of Harrow council's private rented sector enforcement regime and this is what we want to campaign.

e) Q&A

- *Q: I was wondering if you faced any barriers in reaching out to the community, did you have issues with community engagement?*
There are loads of barriers not connected to just issues at Harrow, when you are doing organising work and you are working with people who have lived experience, they don't have the time to get involved in coming to meetings etc, it can be difficult to engage them. It is about developing trust with them, and it takes time and a lot of work to reach our aims.

- *Q: When we talk about justice, we talk about access to free legal advice, and you mentioned the groups of people you supported. Would you say community organising and collective action has allowed that to happen? Is campaigning a compliment to legal remedies or do you need both?*

Every day we are trying to prove and find the most effective ways campaigns interact with legal approaches. Sometimes the legal approach is not the option due to cuts of legal aid and some areas of law get left behind so sometimes it just makes sense to take it up as a campaign. With some housing cases it can be difficult for legal advisors to take it up as casework. There is so much Law Centres can't do with a lack of capacity and legal aid.

- *Q: How do you deal with the boundaries and rules restricting solicitors from knocking on doors to get clients when you are working on an estate?*

Community organising is about door knocking and so far, no one has told me off for knocking on doors just yet. The campaigner role does not directly provide legal advice.

4. London Legal Support Trust- AOB

- Forum members will all receive an email with notes from this session.
- Next Forum date is 13th September.
- If anyone would like to join the forum steering group or volunteer as a rolling chair, please get in touch.