

## St Hilda's East Community Centre and Sonali Gardens



### How BLP helps

In October 2007, BLP established a weekly free legal advice clinic for the community living in the area surrounding Sonali Gardens. The clinic is open to the wider public as well as day care users. Our lawyers provide support on such matters as housing, benefits, small claims and debt.

St Hilda's East is a thriving community centre in Shoreditch, which provides educational, social and recreational activities for a multi-cultural population of all ages.

Sonali Gardens Day Centre is at St Hilda's second site in Shadwell, Tower Hamlets, one of the most deprived parts of London. Sonali Gardens provides culturally appropriate day care for Asian adults and elders with disabilities.

The project is supported by the pro bono legal advice charity, LawWorks, which provides training to our volunteers on all aspects of social welfare law. As well as over 30 BLP lawyers who attend the clinic on a rota basis, we are assisted by volunteer law students from Queen Mary University, who benefit from seeing how the law works in practice.

We also continue to support the Older People's Project run by St Hilda's, arranging activities for the service users, many of whom are living in isolation, and organising one-off events such as day trips out and an annual Christmas party.

### Tell me about

St Hilda's relationship with BLP has been so successful and gone so well it is almost difficult to say when it began! It has become an integral part of our organisation's work and something we seem to have enjoyed and benefited from for a lot longer than the actual five years that the link has existed.

BLP was introduced to us by LawWorks, the legal advice charity, and offered to set up a new legal advice clinic, which replicated the one we already had at our main building in Shoreditch. Sonali Gardens is in the south west part of Tower Hamlets, so having BLP running a clinic there now means that we can provide help to all of the Borough's residents who need it.

BLP also organised students from Queen Mary University to take part in the clinic. The project has been very impressive - the service provided to our clients is effective and we've had a lot of great feedback.

“ Last year, our clinics helped 534 people get help that they would not otherwise have been able to afford. BLP's support is particularly important in this climate as demand is increasing. ”

BLP also supports our Older People's Project based at our main community centre site. Most of our service users are over 75 years old, housebound, with few or no friends and family and they can become very isolated as a result. The BLP team has been fantastic - older people may not sometimes be seen as being a glamorous group to work with, especially in trendy Shoreditch! BLP has arranged for our older users to visit places like the Tower of London and go down the River Thames on a boat trip, as well as organising Christmas parties for them. Our elderly members really enjoy having the chance to do something a bit different and I think the BLP volunteers do as well.

“ St Hilda's relationship with BLP has been so successful. ”

### The difference it makes

BLP's support has had a tremendous impact on a great many individual lives. Many of our service users and other local residents have become more anxious about financial matters over the last six months and, without BLP, we would not be able to provide proper free legal advice to our community. Last year, our clinics helped 534 people get help that they would not otherwise have been able to afford. BLP's support is particularly important in this climate as demand is increasing. It is very difficult to get funding for advice and we would struggle to keep the clinics open without their help. The firm also funds a sessional advice support worker who supports their volunteers at the clinic.

We also greatly appreciate that BLP donates to us half of the money their staff raise from the annual London Legal Support Trust sponsored 10K walk. The firm is constantly looking for other ways to help us and we are extremely pleased that Alison Klarfeld, BLP's Head of CR, now sits on our Board of Trustees. She brings knowledge of the legal world and provides us with valuable governance support.

*Rupert Williams*

Rupert Williams  
Director, St Hilda's East  
rupert@sthildas.org.uk

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