

**ADVICE FOR ALL**



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**Growing Our Own Advice Workforce**



# Who we are

- A trusted, long-term partnership
  - Four frontline organisations led by and for their communities, with over 140 years of combined experience:
    - Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO)
    - Latin American Women's Rights Services (LAWRS)
    - The Baytree Centre
    - High Trees Community Development Trust
  - A specialist legal organisation: Southwark Law Centre
- Each partner brings unique strengths and specialist expertise
- Shared values and a culture of learning and mutual support
- Deep roots in the communities we serve – over 80% of our beneficiaries are from minoritised ethnic, migrant or refugee backgrounds

# Our model

- **Attract:** We bring in new advisers from underrepresented communities – offering paid placements, training and support to help them build skills and confidence and move into advice roles
- **Develop:** We invest in our existing staff and volunteers – growing knowledge, soft skills and wellbeing to deliver high-quality, rights-based advice
- **Learn:** We make space to reflect, adapt and learn together – capturing what works and using it to strengthen the model
- **Amplify:** We share what we've built – supporting other community-led organisations to adapt the model and grow their own advice workforce

# What we've achieved so far

- **Recruiting and developing new advisers:**

- 8 Welfare and Housing Trainee Advisers and 2 Immigration Trainee Advisers
- 5 trainees recruited in Cohort 1 – all women from communities we serve
  - 3 moved into advice roles, 2 into other full-time work
- 151 applications for 10 positions received across two cohorts – strong demand
- Trainees valued being paid to train and learning at their own pace
- Placements now redesigned to improve retention and support

- **Developing our workforce:**

- 23 staff and 5 trainees trained in 18 months
- 8 gained Level 3 IAG qualifications
- 2 advisers progressing to IAA Level 2
- 5 volunteers trained in IAA Level 1
- Key training areas included safeguarding, trauma awareness, human rights, and specialist legal topics

# What we've learned

- **Community-led, non-extractive models work**
  - Peer learning, shared ownership and collective recruitment strengthen trust and collaboration
  - Horizontal partnerships help avoid power imbalances and support mutual growth
  - Tailored resources and joint delivery build shared capacity across organisations
  - Accessible routes matter – many trainees don't have formal qualifications
  - Paid training, flexibility and soft skills support build confidence and commitment
- **Supporting progression to higher levels**
  - Developing immigration advisers to Level 2 is complex but critical
  - Supervision beyond accreditation is essential, especially in immigration work
  - We've built systems to improve supervision and expert support
  - We're embedding sustainability by growing our internal capacity to train and supervise

# What we've learned

## Embedding wellbeing and rights-based practice

- Lived experience is powerful but can be draining – support is essential
- Trauma-informed approaches and wellbeing support are central to our model
- Human rights-based training strengthens both advice delivery and self-advocacy

# The change we're creating

- **Advice workforce:** Building a skilled, resilient and diverse workforce rooted in communities experiencing disadvantage – through a model that removes traditional barriers to entry and progression.
- **Community-led organisations:** Strengthening community-led organisations by investing in their workforce and increasing their ability to adapt, learn and influence wider systems.
- **Advice sector:** Shifting the sector away from top-down models – towards collaborative, community-led approaches that are more equitable, effective and sustainable.
- **Local communities:** Creating lasting impact for the most excluded communities – by improving access to trusted, high-quality advice delivered by people who understand their experiences.

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Thank you!

