

# Voluntary **Action** Islington

## Community Buildings Project

### Case Studies – Supporting Organisations with Asset Transfer

#### Asset Transfer – what is it?

This is about an organisation accepting responsibility for land or buildings that are owned by the council or another public body. This is done with a lease agreement and has to be negotiated between the owner (in these cases, Islington Council) and the organisation. Lease agreements cover what rent may be payable, what responsibilities the organisation will have for repairs and what the building can be used for and so on. These all represent potential liabilities for an organisation in terms of money, skills and time so the whole process is often time consuming and will involve lawyers for both the organisation and the owner.

The process will also involve the organisation demonstrating that they can afford to take on the building, that they will use it to provide services to the public, know how to look after the asset properly and that their organisation is well run.

It will also depend on the history of the building and its ownership, and its overall condition. Some buildings need a lot of money spent on them to make them fit for use by the organisations concerned.

These case studies offer the experience so far of two very different organisations with very different buildings and the kinds of support they have needed through the asset transfer process from the Buildings Project.

#### About The Case Study Organisations

**IMECE** - they want to take on ownership of their premises on Newington Green Road which they currently occupy with another organisation and use as a base for their activities and services.

**Whittington Park Community Association** – they want to take ownership of the centre they occupy which provides space for hire and activities for local people.

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<b>About IMECE</b>	Established in 1982 IMECE is a women only organisation that assists Turkish/Kurdish/Turkish Cypriot women to regain control of their lives. They run counselling sessions help and advice services by phone and drop in sessions
<b>Their Building</b>	It is a four storey building that is used exclusively for service provision and is in need of an upgrade to make it accessible and safe. The building is shared with another organisation that occupies the top two floors – the Turkish Education Group (TEG)
<b>Numbers of staff</b>	13
<b>Address</b>	2 Newington Green Road N1 4RX
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="http://www.imece.org.uk">www.imece.org.uk</a> Tel: 020 7354 1359
<b>Type of Organisation</b>	A company limited and guarantee and registered charity
<b>Annual Income 2011</b>	£358,000 (2011)

<b>About Whittington Park Community Association</b>	The organisation runs the centre and a one o'clock club, lunch club and other activities such as gardening, arts and crafts. Their cafe is run by a local trader which is very child friendly and is open 9am to 5pm. It also hosts a nursery, Leaping Lizards.
<b>Their Building</b>	The Community Centre and one o'clock club buildings are both managed by the Association but owned by the council. The centre has five spaces for hire including two halls and is located in a park but the centre is in need of structural repairs.
<b>Numbers of staff</b>	6

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<b>Address</b>	Yerbury Road N19 4RS
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="http://whittingtonpca.org.uk/">http://whittingtonpca.org.uk/</a> Tel: 020 7272 1847
<b>Type of Organisation</b>	A limited Company and registered charity
<b>Annual Income 2011</b>	£182,000 (2012)

## Why the organisations needed the Buildings Project

Both the organisations want to take on ownership of their building and needed support to do so in a variety of ways.

Initially Whittington Park was visited by the Buildings Project when a new Director was appointed. The Centre had faced financial uncertainties and wanted to look at the Centre's services and its future in the building. The Centre has also now become one of Islington Council's designated Community Hubs. They wanted to take on the building but it needed serious repair works and they needed help with the lease negotiations and preparing to seek the VISIBLE quality mark as part of their new hub status and funding.

IMECE originally contacted the Buildings Project in 2009 for legal advice about the ownership of their building which they and TEG (with whom they share) wanted to take over to provide security to their organisations and their activities. It was complicated by the fact that the building was originally acquired with grant aid to provide a centre for Turkish people in Islington so there were restrictions on how the building could be transferred and on what leasehold terms. The future leasehold arrangements also needed to protect both IMECE and TEG so that they could remain in occupation delivering services.

## How the Buildings Project helped the organisations

The staff of the Buildings Project helped the staff and trustees of both of these organisations in a number of ways.

<b>IMECE</b>	<b>Whittington Park Community Association</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing <b>advice to understand the legal documentation</b> associated with taking on a lease</li><li>• <b>Facilitating an agreement</b> between TEG and IMECE about how they could share the building</li><li>• <b>Supporting them in negotiations</b> with Islington council by attending key meetings to discuss asset transfer</li><li>• <b>Providing information to staff and trustees</b> about the advantages and disadvantages of taking on ownership of their buildings</li><li>• Providing information on sources of <b>funding</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information on sources of <b>funding</b></li><li>• Providing support <b>to understand the legal documentation</b> associated with taking on a lease</li><li>• Providing <b>marketing, promotion and book keeping systems training</b></li><li>• Advice on options for <b>providing a cafe</b></li><li>• Participation in the <b>joint purchasing project</b> to look at options for <b>saving money on cleaning services</b></li><li>• Support with <b>Business Planning</b></li></ul>
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What the Organisations said about the help they got from the Buildings Project

IMECE	Whittington Park Community Association
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<p>“The Buildings Project provided invaluable help tracking down the right people to speak to in the Council”</p> <p>“They helped us get important documents about the building from the land registry and helped us to understand the jargon”</p> <p>“The project helped us to get really good legal advisors who had relevant experience with organisations like us”</p> <p>“You really need to have a person who understands the voluntary sector – what funders want, how management committees work. Having a solicitor is not enough – the Buildings Project is really excellent in that sense”</p> <p>“The Buildings Project helps you to feel well prepared to meet legal advisors and have discussions with the Council”</p> <p>“It helped staff and trustees make informed decisions and know what questions to ask – this helps our users in the end, since if we get improved and accessible premises it will improve our services to them”</p>	<p>“The help provided with funding saved time and prevented us pursuing red herrings in relation to our eligibility”</p> <p>“The marketing and business planning support has been really helpful”</p> <p>“Staff thought that the Customer Care training was brilliant and that it was good for them to meet other staff from centres with similar roles to theirs”</p> <p>“Quick Books training has been empowering in relation to control of finances”</p> <p>“There has been a benefit to our Board of Trustees because an independent and objective view from the Buildings Project of asset transfer and other issues is important to them”</p> <p>“The fact that the advice is specific to community buildings rather than buildings in general is really helpful because it is directly relevant to us”</p>
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