

**feedback from local communities*



Welcome

Thank you for reading our Annual Report. Inside you will find a brief overview of our work and some highlights.

It is with great pride that we present REMA's Annual Report for 2023-2024, a reflection of our unwavering commitment to serving and empowering Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in Rotherham. This year has been marked by resilience, collaboration, and impactful change, as we have continued to adapt and innovate in response to the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

At REMA, we remain steadfast in our mission to embrace diversity, promote equality, and foster a sense of belonging within our borough. Through our programs, partnerships, and advocacy efforts, we have worked tirelessly to address the barriers faced by individuals and families from BAME backgrounds. Whether it is through our Family Hubs, which provide holistic support to parents and children, our groundbreaking STEM initiatives inspiring the next generation, or our Asylum Drop-In service, which offers a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable members of society, this report highlights the breadth and depth of our work. This year has also seen the continuation of vital research into inequalities in aging, community navigation programs tailored to meet the diverse needs of our residents, and innovative educational initiatives like Healthy Cooking on a Budget, which equips participants with essential skills for daily life. Our success stories are a testament to the dedication of our team, the strength of our partnerships, and, most importantly, the resilience and determination of the people we support.

Looking ahead, we are committed to building on this momentum. By listening to the voices of our communities and fostering collaboration with local and national partners, we aim to create even greater opportunities and enhance access to essential services. At the heart of everything we do is our belief that diversity is not just a strength but a driving force for progress.

As you explore the highlights and achievements in this report, we invite you to join us in celebrating the triumphs of this year and reaffirming our shared vision of a more inclusive and equitable society. Together, we can continue to break down barriers, amplify voices, and inspire meaningful change.

Thank you for your continued support.

Angham Ahmed
Chair

Azizzum Akhtar
Chief Executive



AZIZZUM AKHTAR
Chief Executive



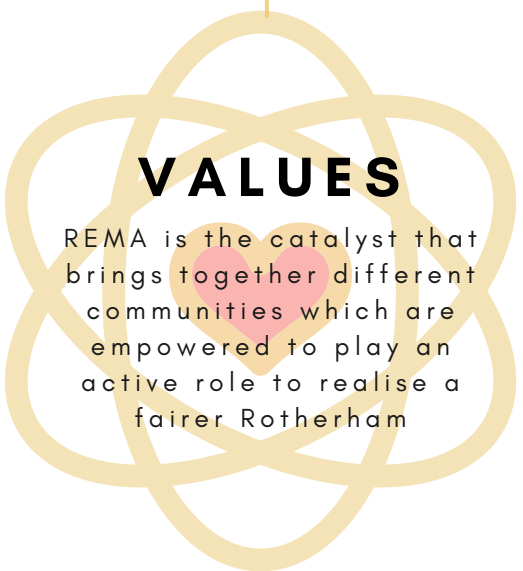
ANGHAM AHMED
Chair

About us

A stylized sun icon with yellow rays emanating from a central circle. The word 'VISION' is written in bold black capital letters across the center of the sun.

VISION

Active communities
that embrace equality
and enjoy Rotherham's
diversity

A stylized atom icon with three overlapping yellow circles. The word 'VALUES' is written in bold black capital letters across the center of the atom.

VALUES

REMA is the catalyst that
brings together different
communities which are
empowered to play an
active role to realise a
fairer Rotherham

A target icon with concentric grey circles and a red star in the center. The word 'MISSION' is written in bold black capital letters across the center of the target.

MISSION

REMA is committed to action
which values diversity and
equality of opportunity,
empowers people and
supports voluntary and
community action

Introduction to REMA

Who we are

Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA) is the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) sector infrastructure support and development organisation in the Borough. REMA is an independent charity that supports the development of a vibrant, effective and influential BME Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector locally (VCFS).

REMA membership has representation from over 50 local VCFS groups ranging from long established training providers through to faith-based organisations and informal social groups.

What we do

REMA provides a wide range of services, including specialist organisational support, volunteering support, advice and training to its membership. REMA also plays an enabling role to support and facilitate joint working between BME VCFS and mainstream VCFS and statutory bodies, and helping to ensure that the interests and concerns of the BME VCFS are represented and championed.

Helping BME people to influence and have a say on issues that affect their lives is a core activity. REMA supports and coordinates RECN, the Rotherham BME Network. This provides a framework for debate and dialogue across the BME VCFS on relevant policy issues and to promote engagement with the public sector.

Family Hubs

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting the BAME community, REMA has established a Family Hub for BAME families. Family Hubs adopt a holistic, whole-family approach, providing a single point of access to family support services. These services are integrated across, social care, voluntary and community organisations, and education. This comprehensive framework ensures that families receive coordinated support tailored to their needs.

A key element of our involvement is the provision of a Family Hub Community Navigator dedicated to the BAME community. This role is central to building engagement and capacity within the Family Hubs by recruiting volunteers, engaging children, young people, and families, and linking them with essential services. The Navigator connects families to REMA's existing services, including immigration advice, settlement support, English classes, and access to the food bank, providing a well-rounded and culturally sensitive support system.

Our work within the Family Hubs has progressed significantly, with a range of activities and initiatives designed to engage and support BAME families. In December, REMA co-delivered three focus groups with Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) to gather feedback from parents on the services available through children's centres, Family Hubs, and health visitor services. Notably, many parents had limited knowledge of activities available for young children in Rotherham and expressed uncertainty about how to connect with health visitors.



Family Hubs (cont'd)



The focus groups also revealed a strong interest in further involvement in children's and family activities. As a result, several parents registered with the Parent Carers Forum, expressing their willingness to engage more actively in future sessions and help shape service delivery. This input is crucial for ensuring that services are responsive to the needs of the BAME community.

In response to community needs, REMA has initiated a popular Baby/Toddler group called "REMA Future Starts." The group provides an interactive space for parents and children to socialise, play, and learn about available services in Rotherham. It also serves as an opportunity for parents to seek guidance on various matters, with referrals to the Community Navigator or other relevant agencies when necessary.

Additionally, we partnered with Early Help to co-deliver the PEEP Learning Together Programme, which started in February. This five-week programme helps parents and carers make the most of learning opportunities in daily life, supporting their children's early development through play.

Looking ahead, our Family Hub Community Navigator has completed training on the Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme). This evidence-based program will equip parents with tools and strategies to create safe, supportive environments for their children.

Asylum Drop-in - One Stop Shop

Held fortnightly, this new collaborative effort brings together key partners including RMBC Housing, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), the British Red Cross, the Refugee Council, and Jobcentre Plus, among other support agencies. The drop-in service offers a unique opportunity for individuals to access a wide range of services in one location, streamlining the process of getting help and ensuring that service users can receive comprehensive support tailored to their needs.



The multi-agency format is a significant advantage, as it enables asylum seekers and refugees to address various issues in a single visit. This approach eliminates the need for individuals to navigate multiple systems and agencies independently, which can be overwhelming and confusing. Whether they require housing advice, legal support, help with welfare benefits, or health-related services, attendees can find the appropriate assistance under one roof.

This integrated model not only saves time but also reduces the stress often associated with accessing multiple services across different locations.

On average, around 40 service users attend each session, underscoring the essential role this drop-in service plays in supporting some of the most vulnerable members of the community. The Unity Centre has become a central hub for delivering coordinated care and assistance, ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees are not only welcomed but also provided with the tools and support necessary to navigate their new lives in the UK.

This initiative exemplifies our commitment to creating a safe and accessible space where individuals can seek help and receive expert advice from multiple agencies, all in one place, making it a critical resource for Rotherham's asylum seeker and refugee population.



Learning

Multiply - Improving numeracy

Multiply is a new initiative aimed at helping adults improve their numeracy skills. As part of the year 1 pilot, REMA delivered a local project titled Healthy Cooking on a Budget, which focused on equipping participants with essential numeracy skills through practical, real-life applications. The course covered strategies for meal planning on a budget, with key topics including tips for keeping food costs low, creating weekly healthy meal plans, price comparison, utilizing leftovers, and effective portioning. These activities provided learners with practical maths skills that they can apply in their daily lives.

The provision has now been successfully completed, exceeding expectations. A total of 36 individuals participated, surpassing the initial target of 30. The project received highly positive feedback during monitoring, positioning it as a strong candidate for further investment in years 2 and 3 of the Multiply programme.

English conversation club

Over 50 new students from a wide range of countries enrolled this year ranging from Afghanistan, Romania, Yemen, China, Pakistan, India, and Ukraine. Students have covered topics about common phrases used in the English language, daily routines, celebrations, job search, holidays, and health and fitness, whilst also practicing pronunciation with phonics. The English language has been a barrier to accessing social events and activities for many of these students. By improving their English communication skills they have managed to attend many events (Women's International Day, Eid Party, and Zumba classes). A few have been practicing the Driving Theory Test and now have passed their Driving Test.



Our classroom is a place where people are valued, listened to, included, supported and have an active involvement in the content of their classes. Students are encouraged to communicate meaningfully about their situations and experiences before focusing on the technicalities of a new language.

Community Navigators

Our Community Navigators is responsible for assisting New Arrivals in registering with and engaging local services, ensuring they and their families integrate smoothly into the community.

The demand for this service has steadily increased, driven by positive word-of-mouth within the community and among referral partners. The noticeable impact of the service has further fuelled this growing demand. By maintaining a long-term case management approach, the service has achieved significantly improved outcomes for users. This year, we have observed some new areas of demand, including assistance with Universal Credit capability assessments. Additionally, as the cost-of-living crisis continues to affect households, there has been a notable rise in requests for help with grant applications for essential household items such as refrigerators, beds, and washing machines. We also saw an increase in referrals from midwifery and 0-19 services, particularly for families with no recourse to public funds. Our Community Navigators supported this cohort by connecting them to food parcels, clothing, and assistance with grant applications for essential items.

We have supported clients in a variety of ways....

Housing- support people to challenge private landlords on repairs & maintenance, homeless clients; supporting social housing applications

Benefits – support benefits applications and grant applications for the energy crises and challenging wrong decisions

Health – supporting access to health services (GP registration, Dentists, book appointments)

Finances – supporting grant applications for essential items (fridge, cooker, washing machine, government schemes); support to set up



Community Navigators (cont'd)

Education – school registrations, supporting meetings in school. We supported children and adults' education.

Help tackling **isolation/loneliness** – supporting befriending; sign up for groups, college, English classes and voluntary work

Employment - signpost clients to services that offer CV and job search advice

51 home visits were carried out to clients that faced transport issues or single parents with very young children. Without such a proactive approach, many of these people would simply be unable to access support.

Your paragraph text

Over the course of the year 344 clients were supported

“

María has been an excellent person, she helped me with food and my mental health, she was always my support, talking to my son's school, because the language was difficult. May God always bless you for helping us

”

Refugee Advice Surgeries



The specialist asylum and refugee service has delivered vital support to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Through our adviser-led service, we offer a wide range of assistance, including BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) tracing, follow-up on Family Reunion applications, completion of Schedule 10 application forms, travel document inquiries, spouse visa requirements, FLR (Further Leave to Remain) (FP) renewals, asylum support, EU settlement applications for children, naturalisation processes for children, and updates to the Home Office on various matters.

Additionally, we have identified recurring challenges in the support we provide, particularly related to long wait times for fee waiver decisions and errors on BRP cards. These issues have a significant impact on clients' access to essential services and their overall well-being.



“

"The immigration Advice has been a lifeline for me and my family during our immigration journey. Their knowledgeable adviser helped us understand the application process but also provided ongoing support and reassurance. Thanks to their dedication, we can now look forward to building our new home."

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Inequalities in Aging

Research has shown that older adults from BAME communities often experience disproportionate inequalities in health, social care, and financial well-being compared to the wider population. Studies highlight that BAME older adults are more likely to face barriers in accessing healthcare and social services, encounter language and cultural challenges, and are at higher risk of social isolation and financial hardship. These disparities make targeted research and intervention critical to addressing the unique needs of these communities and improving their overall aging experience.

REMA has embarked on a 3 year research project led by University of Sheffield, aimed at exploring inequalities in aging within BAME communities. The project involves collaboration with several local organizations, including the Rotherham Muslim Community Forum, Wah Hong Chinese Association, CLP, and the Kashmiri Yemeni Older Peoples Forum. REMA is serving as a co-researcher on the project, in partnership with SADACCA. As part of the project, REMA has successfully convened a Voice Forums, engaging 12 local older individuals to advise and inform the research process. Additionally, recruitment for Community Researchers is now underway. They will be charged with conducting interviews and gathering insights from the Rotherham community.



BAME Tenants Research and Engagement

Working in partnership with Rotherfed, the purpose of this work is to support BAME council tenants by addressing challenges in accessing housing services and improving their living conditions. Through outreach, we engaged 13 community groups to share information on the experiences of BAME communities on housing issues.

We organised 8 sessions where Rotherfed staff presented to these groups, gathering feedback from council tenants. A dedicated session was held for refugee tenants to capture their property sign-up experiences. Concerns raised were relayed to the Council

Improving representation in STEM

In partnership with local communities and Work-Wise, we implemented an awareness-raising project designed to inspire BAME children to explore careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This week-long program targeted 11 boys and girls, aged 14 to 16, from Asian and Asian British backgrounds. Through interactive workshops, hands-on activities, and mentorship from role models, we aimed to break down misconceptions about STEM, showcase diverse success stories, and highlight exciting career opportunities in these fields.

This work is crucial as it fosters curiosity, confidence, and a sense of belonging, helping to overcome barriers that often limit BAME representation in STEM careers. Empowering young people with knowledge and access to role models can inspire the next generation of diverse STEM professionals in South Yorkshire, contributing to a more inclusive and innovative future workforce.



Ramadan campaign

In collaboration with Rotherham Muslim Community Forum and The Unity Centre during Ramadan, REMA recognised a significant need among the residents of the two initial accommodation hotels for asylum seekers in Rotherham. Many of these residents lacked access to Qurans and prayer mats, essential for their religious observance. These residents are very vulnerable and marking the special month alone for the first time.

In response, REMA initiated a campaign to gather donations from the local community. The support was overwhelming, with generous contributions from local families and mosques. As a result, REMA successfully collected and distributed 108 Qurans and over 100 prayer mats to the hotel residents, ensuring they could observe Ramadan with the necessary materials.

Governance

Governance, structure and management Legal status and objects

REMA is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated in 2003. It was established under a memorandum of association, which sets out its objects and powers and is governed under its articles of association. The memorandum and articles of association were last updated on 29th October 2010. REMA obtained charitable status on 11th February 2011. Our principal objective, as set out in our constitution, is to be the sole Umbrella Organisation for all of Rotherham's Minority Ethnic Communities by being the means of engagement for these communities within all regeneration activity at local, sub-regional, regional, national and international levels.

Trustee Board

The Trustee Board has ultimate responsibility for the governance and strategic direction of REMA, ensuring that the charity upholds its ethos and values whilst delivering its objectives.

Management

Operational management of REMA is delegated by the directors to the Chief Executive, who is accountable to the Trustee Board for the stewardship of the charity. The Chief Executive attends Board and Committee meetings.

Chief Executive: Azizzum Akhtar

Charity Number 1140365

Company Number 4730630

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank 27 Bridgegate Rotherham S60 1SN

CAF Bank Ltd 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Mailling Kent ME19 4JQ

Unity Trust Bank PO Box 7193, Planetary Road Willenhall WV19DG

Accounts

Prepared by HSL Accountancy Solutions

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