



ROTHERHAM ETHNIC MINORITY ALLIANCE
REMA
ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome

Thank you for picking up our Annual Report for 2022 - 2023. Inside you will find a brief overview of our work and some highlights.

At REMA we are committed to improving outcomes for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities by supporting the wonderful array of community groups, committed volunteers and engaged individuals who are the backbone of both the BME communities and Rotherham as a whole.

We hope this report will give you a sense of our work and how we performed during the year. The report for year 2022/23 reflects the year as we came out of the pandemic and returned to the new normal. Its lingering effects were worsened by the war in Ukraine and rocketing fuel prices.

The current high cost of living is felt most keenly by BAME families as it further exposes the inequalities that exist in society. We have refocussed our attention on struggling BAME families by increasing our capacity in advice and support services

Over the next pages, you will find out more about our work, with highlights from all of our service areas. Of course, the report only provides a brief snapshot, so please contact us to find out more. You can do this in person at our office in The Unity Centre or by visiting our website and social media channels.

This year was also the first after the ending of our funding for infrastructure support. Sadly this will have a major impact on the support we can provide to our member organisations. However, we remain committed to doing all that we can to ensure a vibrant BAME Voluntary and Community sector in Rotherham

As always, we are grateful to all of our staff, volunteers and trustees for their excellent work on behalf of our members and BME communities. We would also like to recognise and thank all partners and funders for their continued support

Azizzum Akhtar (CEO) & Angham Ahmed (Chairperson)



About us



VISION

Active communities that embrace equality and enjoy Rotherham's diversity



VALUES

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



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.

Ramadan in asylum hotels



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.

In collaboration with Rotherham Muslim Community Forum and The Unity Centre, REMA hosted an Iftar for the hotel residents, which approximately 20 individuals attended. An iftar is the meal that Muslims eat to break their fast after sunset during the holy month of Ramadan. The residents had expressed concerns about the quality of food available to them during Ramadan, and this event was a meaningful gesture of community support. Local families also participated by cooking and providing additional dishes, enhancing the meal's variety and quality. The residents greatly appreciated the effort, reflecting on the community's solidarity and compassion during the holy month.

Community Navigators

Our Community Navigator is charged with helping New Arrivals to register and engage with local services to ensure they and their families settle well into the local community.

By adopting a longer-term case management approach, we have been able to conduct thorough needs assessments to deliver more effective support. The Navigators have been instrumental in addressing a variety of concerns, such as housing challenges, social responsibilities, school admissions, translations, and other matters that are vital for families to establish themselves in a new country. Access to social housing was one of the most common issues people faced during the year. People shared their difficulties to contact the Council due to language barrier; no access to internet or lack of digital skills to complete and manage the housing online system. This service has also been inundated with people struggling with the rise of the cost of living crises. More and more people are needing support to manage their finances and need additional help with grant applications

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 agreement plans or signpost to debt advise services



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

119 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.

Over the course of the year 403 clients were supported

“

“Big thank you to Maria she is very nice friendly person always when I needed her she was there she can sort things out in minutes and make people lives better , She really helped me a lot and am really glad that this community got this kind of person there ,thank you”

”



Refugee Drop-In

There was an increase in enquiries from asylum seekers still waiting for the substantive interview. We have had to re-assure people as their waits grow longer. Geopolitics has a major impact on the system and anxiety levels of the people affected. People were worried that they might be sent to Rwanda and the War in Ukraine put additional strain on an already overworked Home Office immigration system.

Our Refugee and Asylum service carried out complex casework and holistic support for a wide range of clients from all over the world. Support was provided on asylum housing issues, Home Office applications and appeals, family reunion. Refugees were given support on move-on issues including homelessness, destitution, upskilling, qualification conversion and budgeting.

We supported many people with naturalisation, particularly for children from the EU. There was a large number of people who had not realised they need to apply for EU Settlement for their children and as a result required assistance to use the naturalisation pathway instead.

“

"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."

”



Roma EU Drop-in

The Drop-in surgeries provide the local Roma community with access to a Roma support worker to advise and support them through a wide range of issues including benefit advice, accessing healthcare and housing issues.

Our advisor provided support in the Roma language, addressing issues including benefits, accessing council and health services, and concerns surrounding Brexit and settlement status.



“

“thank you for having people like you who help us make our life better with your unconditional support on behalf of my son and mine I thank you very much for everything I will always be grateful you were a great blessing in our lives

”



Learning

English conversation club

Our ESOL course is for learners whose first language is not English. Learners develop their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in the sessions. The provision is accessible, comprehensive, and integrated. We reach out into the community and provide well-constructed but flexible routes into future development courses.

Our provision is based on the needs of individuals, conversational English, and phonics learning sessions are the most popular among students. 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.

“
I would like to say thank you very much for helping us not just learning English, but we have made new friends and we have got some help in our family.”



Inspire

Community events

We hosted and took part in a multitude of community events over the year. Some of them were to support social campaigns, others were held to engage, inform or educate communities.

Black History Month

We worked with our Black communities in Rotherham to coproduce a series of Black led workshops to learn more about their experiences, their connections to Rotherham and challenges they face. A final celebration event was held at the end of October. This featured a range of local black communities and business highlighting and celebrating their culture, history and entrepreneurship.



Diversity Festival

We coordinated the two day festival and curated performances and workshops from dozens of local voluntary groups. Sessions varied from bollywood dancing to boxing (with Rotherham's very own Heavyweight European champion Kash Ali) and arts and crafts to pop-up cooking classes.

WOW - Women of the World

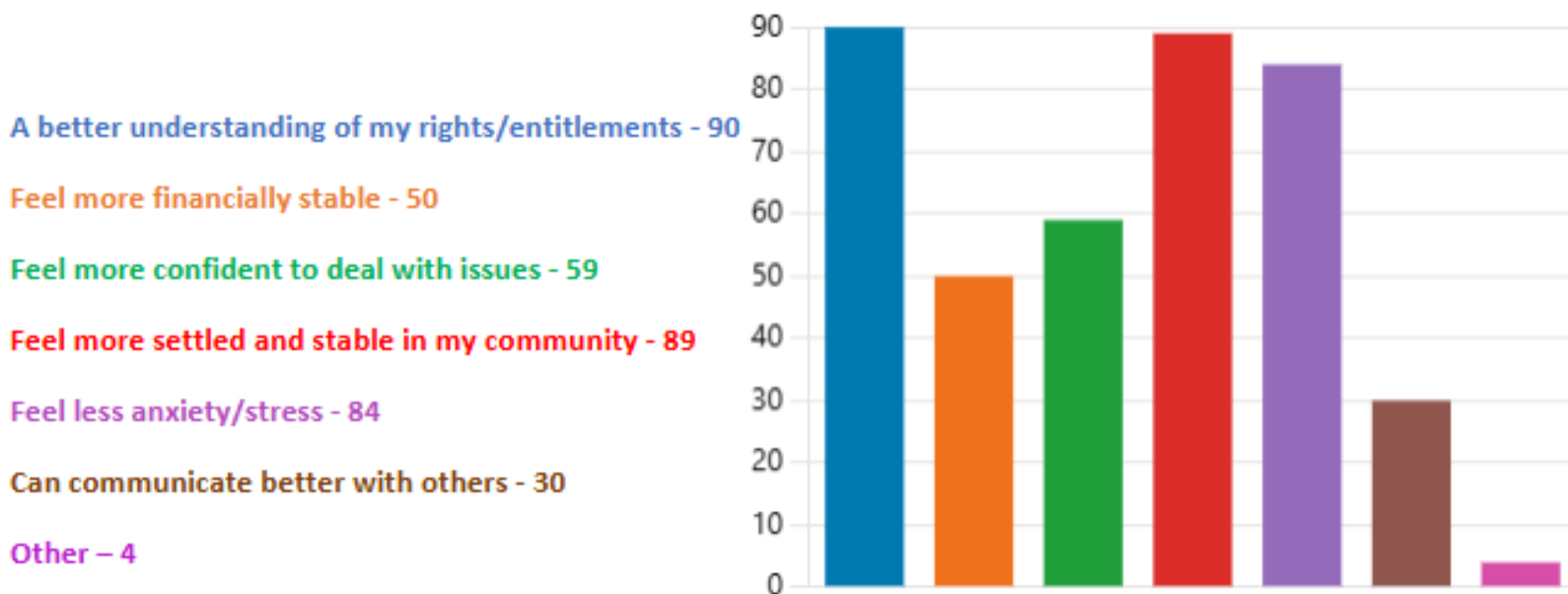
Provided community engagement to ensure the visibility and involvement of Black and Minority communities at the festival



Impact

We supported over 700 people during the year, across our service areas. The impact of our work has been profound, addressing a broad range of needs in Rotherham. Through our comprehensive advice and support services, we have been able to alleviate the anxieties and burdens faced by these vulnerable populations. Our Community Navigators have provided essential assistance on housing, education, health, and financial matters, ensuring clients can establish themselves in their new environments. The support for Roma communities has helped them navigate settlement issues, while our ESOL courses have empowered individuals to improve their language skills and integrate more fully into the community. Overall, the targeted interventions and holistic support we offer have made a significant difference in the lives of those we serve, fostering a sense of stability, confidence, and empowerment among our client.

We asked people to tell us about the difference we made in our service user survey. They reported the following outcomes:



Collaborate

Collaboration is crucial to addressing complex issues. It is the cornerstone of innovation, enabling diverse teams to combine their unique skills and perspectives to achieve common goals.

NIHR Bioresource

REMA is part of national VCS group tasked with a communications campaign to increase the number of volunteers to NIHR BioResource Research from South Asian, and African and Caribbean communities. The campaign is designed to encourage BAME people to volunteer to give blood and saliva samples for use in medical research



Anticipatory care

Working with Age UK, REMA undertook research to inform how best to engage local (VCS) services in supporting a transformed delivery of anticipatory care to older BAME people. We also delivered a pilot initiative in response to the outcomes of the research report and explored different delivery approaches. Our community worker interviewed dozens of older BAME people to inform the work. Our findings showed that transport was the single biggest barrier, however there was great enthusiasm to learn new skills that increase independent living.



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 and delivers 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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