

# EQUALITY ACTION **2020** | **ANNUAL** **2021** | **REPORT**



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# Chair's Report

**"What a year it has been. If someone had said to me two years ago that there was going to be a global health pandemic and the whole world and how we work and live was going to change, I'm not sure I would have believed them. But here we are!"**

I want to start by saying an enormous thank you to our staff team, the wider Board members and our partners. The fantastic work we have done to support our local communities this year simply wouldn't have been possible without all of you. The uncertain and ever-changing landscape of the last 18 months has been enormous, and to a certain extent still is. Varsha has led our organisation with a calm and can-do attitude which I know has been invaluable to us all, at this time of heightened stress and uncertainty.

I am unbelievably proud of what we have achieved this past year. As a small team, supporting 178 beneficiaries during the various lockdowns is no easy task, and I am inspired by our staff team who often go above and beyond for the people we work with and for. And the case studies shown in this report, evidence that our work is making a difference to our beneficiaries, and I have no doubt it will continue to do so for many years to come.

Looking ahead I am thrilled to be able to continue to support our wonderful organisation as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Even with the global health pandemic and the challenges it brings, we are working together strategically to further develop our organisation and ensure we are sustainable for the future. As just one example, we are working with an external consultant to review and enhance our business and strategic plans. This will ensure they are fit for purpose, and we can continue to support our communities in Charnwood, not just today but for the years ahead.

# Chair's Introduction

We are a small yet formidable organisation – in a positive sense of course! I may not have been born when we started out over 50 years ago but knowing we have a legacy to uphold and that we have communities who so urgently need our help and support, motivates, inspires and encourages me every day. To know that we may only employ a small number of staff and be a small organisation and yet we continue to maintain and grow our professional partnerships such as Vita Minds, The Big Lottery and Charnwood Borough Council, to name only a few, is a testament to excellent work we do and the benefits our services bring to those in our communities.

A big thank you again to our staff team including our volunteers, trustees, members and our partners. It may have been a challenging 18 months, but here is to the next 18! If we can deliver and achieve everything, we have done in the last 18 months during a global health pandemic, I am excited to see what we can achieve in the next few years to come.

*Lisa*



**Lisa Vine -**  
**Chair of Board of Trustees**



# EQUALITY ACTION IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER.

COVID-19 has shone a harsh light on the inequalities that persist within our society. We continue to work with individuals, communities and organisations to bring equality to all.

# Treasurer's report

I am pleased to be able to report that we remain in a reasonably healthy financial position and, as will be seen elsewhere in the annual report, we have been able to assist many folks in a local and wider area.

In last year's report, I mentioned the effect that Covid was having, and although we did have to furlough some of our staff, we were able to continue providing services. Little did I think though that Covid would still be affecting our lives mid-way through 2021.

Among the various initiatives mentioned elsewhere in our report, I was delighted that we secured a 5-year project with Vita Minds This will give mental health support not only in Charnwood but in a wider area as well.

As our activities have expanded during the last few years this has meant the figures behind our accounts have become a bit more complex. Trustees have therefore decided to use professional advice to enhance our existing accounting package to make it more user friendly. This will let us account for our various projects in a more meaningful way. We are grateful to Duncan & Toplis Ltd, our accountants, for their assistance with this.

*Trevor  
Shaw*



**Trevor Shaw -  
Company Secretary**

# Highlights

**1500+**

people supported over  
the phone or via face to  
face appointments



**87**

people supported to  
fill out the 2021  
census forms



**180**

self-care, food, and  
family support packs  
delivered



**159**

laptops and tablets  
donated to schools



**178**

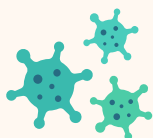
beneficiaries were  
kept in contact with  
during the  
lockdowns

# Advice Work

This year has been the most challenging for the communities we work with, most having been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.

Our Caseworkers have had to find innovative ways to continue keeping in touch and supporting our clients. They used WhatsApp and video calls as well as the usual telephone and face-to-face appointments.

Covid -19 has caused a lot of confusion, grief, fear and worry within the community. We have been able to provide advice, support, and information safely and securely. Here are some of the ways our caseworkers have supported with Covid-19.



## Understanding Covid-19

Supporting individuals to understand what Covid-19 is and how to stay safe.



## Understanding Guidelines

Keeping individuals informed and translating the Government's Covid advice.



## Isolation Support

Ensuring those who were shielding and isolating had the right support.



## Booking Tests and Vaccines

Booking tests and vaccines for those struggling due to access and language

# Thank you!

We are so grateful that funding from The Access to Justice Foundation and Leicestershire County Council has enabled us to meet the increasing demand for our casework due to Covid-19 and Brexit.

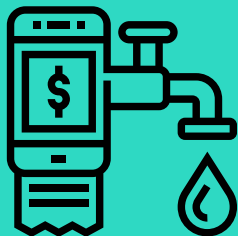


THE  
ACCESS  
TO JUSTICE  
FOUNDATION

# Helping thousands of people a year, on a range of matters.

We help everyone through whatever they are facing and when we cannot support them directly we refer them to relevant partner agencies. Here are just a few of the areas we have helped with over the past year:

## Customer and Utilities



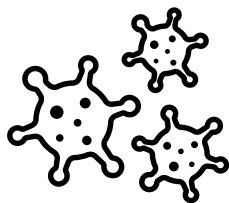
## Immigration



## Benefits



## Isolation and Lockdown



## Testing and Vaccines



## Debt



## Housing



## Mental and Physical Health



## Employment and Upskilling



## Not just an appointment

We often see individuals coming in about a certain issue but our caseworkers take the time to find out about an individual's situation, building trust and go on to support them on several other issues. Our clients are frequently signposted to one of our projects that work on mental and physical health, skills, and employment.

**"I appreciate  
your support  
deep in my  
heart"**

One regular service user Mr S reached out when his son, whom he lives with, tested positive for Covid - 19. Feeling scared, worried, and unsure what to do Mr S called one of our caseworkers for support.

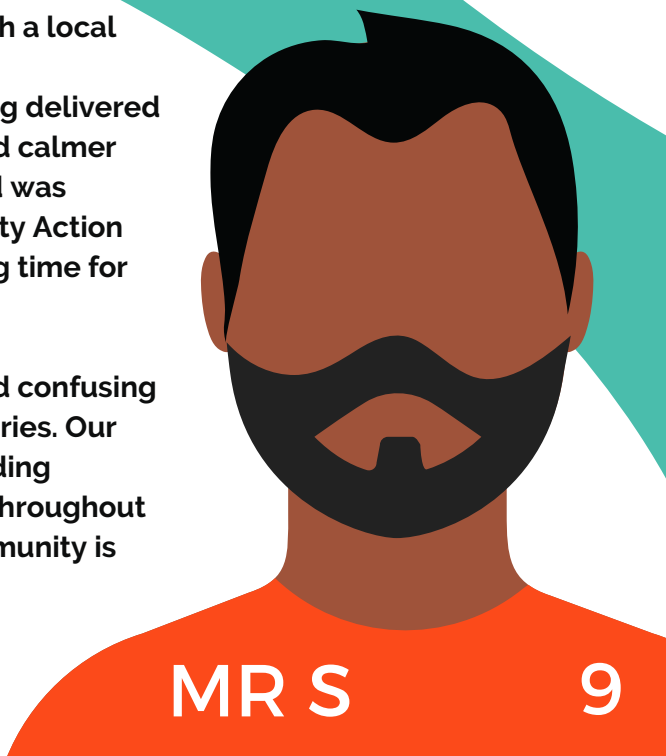
Mr S was agitated and did not know many people in the area so was worried about how they would manage. Our caseworker kept in constant contact with Mr S while the family were self-isolating, offering reassurance and practical advice about keeping safe.

After putting Mr S in touch with a local charity, he was able to get his prescription and food shopping delivered to his home. Mr S felt safer and calmer knowing he was not alone and was incredibly grateful that Equality Action was there during this troubling time for him and his family.

Covid -19 has been a scary and confusing time for many of our beneficiaries. Our caseworkers have been providing constant support and advice throughout this period to ensure the community is supported.

**MR S**

**9**





THE RANK FOUNDATION'S

# Time to Shine

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Time to Shine

You might have noticed this year's annual report looks different to previous years.

Thanks to The Rank Foundation, Harvinder has joined our team as our Fundraising and Communications Officer. Working on our social media, fundraising ideas and our communications, we hope to drive more engagement within the community and shout about the amazing work that happens here at Equality Action.

We have seen an increase in our engagement and following on social media and are enjoying sharing more about what we get up to and the difference we make.

**"I am incredibly grateful to Equality Action and The Rank Foundation to be given this amazing opportunity. The dedication and passion of the team and trustees to support and empower the community is inspiring!"**

**- Harvinder**



# Positive Minds Project

Positive Minds was a vital lifeline this year, enabling us to keep in contact with individuals when we were not allowed to meet our groups in person.

The pandemic had quite an impact on people's mental health. Many parents were struggling with teaching their kids at home, something they had never faced before, and this proved especially hard for parents who struggle with reading, writing and using technology.



Creating a WhatsApp group, we kept in touch with our beneficiaries, sharing ideas, posting links to online classes and supporting each other.

Loughborough East partnership, led by Fearon Hall, set up free sport and activities as we came out of the first lockdown. This enabled us to provide free sessions that encouraged people to start getting involved in well-being, thus building confidence that had declined due to lockdown.

We followed strict government guidelines to ensure everyone was safe.

**This sports program  
was thanks to funding  
from:**



**LEICESTER-SHIRE  
& RUTLAND SPORT**  
SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



**Bhangra Blaze**



**Swimming**



**Walking**



**Chair Based  
Yoga**



**Aerobics**

Our women-only swimming sessions, where we provide privacy and a female lifeguard, are very popular as they meet cultural requirements as well as providing physical exercise.

We receive positive feedback from the women who find the sessions, which are delivered in a safe manner, beneficial for their health and wellbeing,





**"I feel so happy I can share my thoughts and opinions with others at the ILP Café"**

Mr A contacted us shortly after the death of his son feeling distressed and overwhelmed, having very little English language and feeling lost as his son was his main carer.

When Mr A came to us he was feeling depressed and scared while also struggling with health conditions.

Our caseworker helped him with his advice matters including Universal Credit and medical appointments and referred him to the ILP project for other support.

Through the project Mr A joined some health and wellbeing sessions and cultural workshops, and became a regular attendee at the ILP Café. He really looks forward to meeting others and getting involved in the activities including playing board games.

The project helped Mr A with confidence and well-being. It is great to see he is now better at managing his physical and mental health and has also taken up counselling sessions. The project has enabled Mr A to deal with his own situation by improving his mental health and confidence.





## January saw the end of our 5-year Improving Lives Project (ILP)



# Improving Lives Project

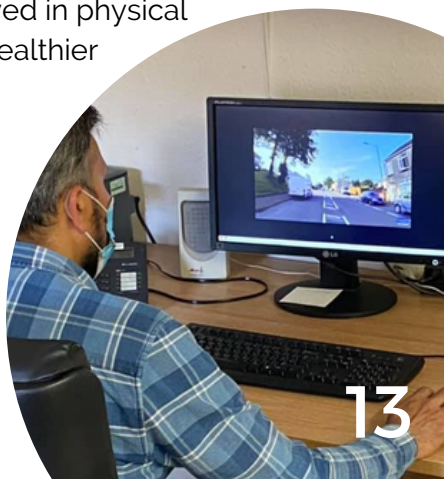
Our Improving Lives Project enabled us to work with a particularly hard to reach group, men of Black, Asian, & Minority Ethnic backgrounds (BAME). During the last year, we reached over 240 men in the local community through our group and one-to-one sessions.

Participants engaged in workshops around English, ICT and employability skills, enabling them to deal better with their matters such as job searches, online benefit support and utilities.

***"I really look forward to going swimming with my dad and spending time with him". - A young participant***

We increased and developed the health and wellbeing knowledge of our beneficiaries with individuals getting involved in physical activities and adopting healthier diet choices.

This was achieved by supporting the men with access to a range of physical activities and increasing their knowledge around healthy eating.



### Aim: to work with BAME men to: -



Improve Health  
and Wellbeing



Increase activeness  
in society



Improve  
confidence



Increase  
employability skills



Promote community  
values and  
inclusiveness

# VitaMinds Project

We have started an exciting new 5-year project VitaMinds from April 2021. We are community partners for The Vita Health Group in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Service across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) for people, particularly from BAME backgrounds.

## VitaMinds aims to: -



Raise awareness of the IAPT services and refer people to the free service provided by Vita Health Group on behalf of the NHS



Build trust and confidence to reduce stigma and reluctance to engage with mental health services



Increase the number of people from BAME communities being treated using evidence based approaches to deal with anxiety and depression



Run a range of community support and engagement sessions throughout LLR to support physical and mental health.

We are delighted that this project will help us to reach and connect with the wider communities across LLR through our various physical, mental health and wellbeing activities. And we are optimistic that the project will ensure a positive impact on people's lives and help them to contribute in the society.



We also want to build the capacity of the communities with regard to mental health by training up community champions and mentors to support this work

# Our year in pictures





# Our Staff



**Varsha Parmar**  
Executive Officer



**Mina Galliara**  
Administrative  
Assistant



**Harvinder Poonian**  
Funding and  
Communications



**Amina Wadud**  
Caseworker



**Kazi Mashud**  
Caseworker



**Chayara Chowdhury**  
Caseworker / VitaMinds  
Project Officer



**Mehraj Alamgir**  
VitaMinds  
Project Officer



**Anita Barrant**  
VitaMinds  
Project Officer



**Taruna Mistry**  
VitaMinds  
Project Officer



**Yesmin Choudhury**  
Positive Minds  
Project Officer



**Minara Rahman**  
Positive Minds  
Project Officer

# Our Trustees

Our trustees play a vital role to ensure our organisation's governance is in line with the Charity Commission and Company House rules and we work to our mission, aims and objectives. They have been a great source of support for us during this challenging year ensuring the well-being and safety of our staff and clients.



Lisa Vine



Yasmin Ali



Trevor Shaw



Abida Akram



Peter Lewis



Charles Dobbin



Alea Hanif



Emily Keightly



Jill Vincent



Geetha Bala



Monica Sharman



# THANK YOU!



To our supporters, funders and members for your support throughout this incredibly tough year.

Charnwood Borough Council  
Charnwood Data  
De Lisle Catholic School  
Leicestershire County Council  
Limehurst Academy  
Loughborough College Music Students  
The Access to Justice Foundation  
The Good Things Foundation  
The National Lottery Community Fund  
The Rank Foundation  
We Care UK  
Vita Health Group

And everyone who has donated time, money, tech or goods to our work throughout the year. We are so very grateful.

# Members

**Hon. President** The Mayor of Charnwood

**Hon. Solicitor** Mr D Pagett-Wright (Moss Solicitors)

**Hon. Treasurer** Mr T Shaw

## Individuals

Abida Akram  
Alea Hanif  
Amrat Bava  
Anne Williams  
Ann Gimpel  
Anthony Gimpel  
Betty Newton  
Charles Dobbin  
Emily Keightley  
Jill Vincent  
John R Catt  
Lisa Vine  
Mike Jones  
Nicky Morgan  
Peter Lewis  
Stan Cramer  
Sue M Velado  
Trevor Shaw  
Vicky Clark  
Yasmin Ali

## Organisations

All Saints with Holy Trinity  
Brahma Kumari  
Bridge East Midlands  
Charnwood Arts  
Charnwood Borough Council  
Fearon Hall  
Geeta Bhawan  
John Storer Charnwood  
Limehurst Academy  
Loughborough Baptist Church  
Loughborough Churches Partnership  
Loughborough College  
Loughborough Labour Party  
Loughborough Council of Faiths  
Loughborough United Reformed Church  
Loughborough University





# STRENGTHENING OUR WORK AS WE GO FORWARD

We are in an exciting and challenging time for our charity and we look forward to the future and what it brings.

I want to take this opportunity to say a massive thank you to our board, members, staff, volunteers, partners and funders for supporting us.

- Varsha Parmar [Executive Officer]

**We are open**  
**Monday - Friday**  
**9.30 - 5pm**



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Contact@equalityaction.org.uk



## **Website**

Equalityaction.org.uk



# CONTACT US

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