

Annual Report 2017/18



**Promoting equality and diversity,
dignity and respect
through inclusion.**

**Registered Charity Number: 1088411
Company Number: 4198889**

Contents page

Letter from the Mayor of Charnwood	3
Chair's Report	4
Treasurer's Report	6

Advice work and projects

Advice work (voluntary basis)	7
Debt & Money Management work	7
Improving Lives Project (Big Lottery Fund)	8
Prevent Conference	13
Hate Crime Conference	14
Chances for All Project (Big Lottery Fund)	15
English My Way (The Good Things Foundation)	20
European Training events (Erasmus Plus)	21
Loughborough Mela	25

Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees, committees and staff	26
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Membership

List of Members 2017/2018	27
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Equality Action

During my year as Mayor I have been very fortunate to attend a number of events organised and arranged by Equality Action, an organisation I had been involved with prior to my Mayoral year and fully intend to continue my association with them.

The thing that was very clear throughout the year was the support from all the different communities and the common vision to jointly seek peaceful and lasting solutions to the many common problems shared by all communities and faiths.

At every event and gathering I attended the welcome I received was so warm, loving and kind, it is good to see the relationship between different groups that have a common bond they can share for the good of all in the local community.

Councillor Pauline Ranson
Mayor of Charnwood 2017/18

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Visit us at www.charnwood.gov.uk



Chair's Report

I am very proud of the work the organisation has gone through to modernise our identity and we have now been operating as Equality Action for over a year. Not only have we had a new name but the frontage of our building has been refreshed and is looking great. In addition we have a new website and mission statement "Promoting equality and diversity, dignity and respect through inclusion". I believe this is an accurate statement of what we want to achieve as an organisation. In the coming year you will see our presence on social media become stronger as we work to develop media clips and case studies to promote our activities and reach out to those who need our services, and this is an exciting prospect for us.



Our very successful 'Chances for All' Project ended in March this year after five years of empowering the lives of women from South Asian communities (report on pages 15-19). I know this project has made a positive difference to the lives of many women and, by extension, their families. I am very pleased we have secured a further five years funding from The Big Lottery for a follow on project we have called 'Positive Minds'. This project was born out of the 'Chances for All' project when we identified that work was needed to support mental health in BAME communities. This is a very exciting time for us and I know this project is going to make a positive difference to our communities.

Our men's project 'Improving Lives' is now in its third year (report on pages 8-14) and has successfully delivered positive outcomes. We have two more delivery years in this project and more men from South Asian communities are engaging with the project. The projects aim is to improve health, wellbeing and confidence of the men involved and also to increase employment prospects by developing relevant skills and confidence.

We have also delivered short term debt and money management projects funded by Charnwood Borough Council advising local people on how better to manage their finances.

We believe we are stronger together and continue to work closely with local voluntary and community organisations. Partnership working is vital to help develop our communities. An example is our recent regional conference on hate crime in partnership with The Race Equality Centre (Leicester) and Northamptonshire Rights & Equalities Council (report on page 14)

Our voluntary casework continues on an appointment basis, and I would like to thank Chayara Chowdhury, Amina Wadud and Kazi Mashud who give their time so generously to meet the ever increasing needs of the community. This service is invaluable and helps the lives of so many local residents.

Our European work continued successfully delivering training events to young people from across Europe and Charnwood on equality and human rights issues. I would particularly like to thank Nadja Rein for her dedication to this valuable work; it really does bring communities together. A detailed report can be found on pages 21 -24. We are unsure of the future of this work beyond Brexit but we will do everything we can to ensure it continues.

We are going through a recruitment process again to attract new trustees and we are keen to get people with relevant skills and experience but we also want enthusiasm and commitment. Please do contact the office for a chat if you would like more information.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all board members for their dedication and enthusiasm. We have been lucky to attract a number of new board members in the past year and their experience and enthusiasm has been inspiring. It really is a pleasure to work with all the board members.

I would like to thank Varsha Parmar our Executive Officer who has been with the organisation for many years and has seen us evolve and become the organisation we are now. Varsha is always positive and has a real 'can do' attitude; we are very lucky to have her.

I also want to mention Trevor Shaw, our treasurer, who has expertly guided the organisation through some very challenging financial situations. I am also very happy that one of our trustees, Lynne Newbitt, will be stepping up to the mark and will be supporting Trevor with his financial guidance of the organisation.

Finally I must express our sincere thanks to all our funders, Charnwood Borough Council, the Big Lottery Fund and the British Council (Erasmus Plus) for supporting our work and the generous grants that have enabled us to continue our valuable work improving the lives of people in our communities.

Justin O'Brien



Some of
the
trustees
2017 -
2018

Treasurer's Report

The past year has had several highlights for me.

Our latest Strategic Partnership agreement with Charnwood Borough Council came to an end on 31 March 2018 and Trustees were delighted that our application for a new agreement was accepted.

This means we will be funded for two years until March 2020 to bring benefit the Borough's citizens; especially those from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.



Another highlight of the year was the success of the English My Way project within the BAME women's' community. It was gratifying to see so many were able to improve the confidence and language skills, led by two ladies from their own circle.

We start a new financial year with the news of us gaining another Big Lottery award for 5 years work on mental awareness within the BAME community and with the knowledge that we will have a balanced budget for 2018/19.

On the downside, our application for funding for casework was not successful. The need for this work is ever evident and we are grateful that our volunteers continue to give of their time so that we can offer as much work as we can.

We are blessed with dedicated and hard working staff and volunteers, ably led by Varsha – well done all!!

Once again thanks go to our accountants and auditors Duncan & Toplis Limited for the service they give us.

Trevor Shaw



Advice Work

We continue to provide casework on benefits, welfare, immigration, housing etc. The range of queries is ever expanding and our clients come from diverse backgrounds. During the year we have seen over 300 clients, some with multiple issues. We have had a high number of refusals of Personal Independence Payments for clients. We challenged these and had success in over 80% of the cases.

The Universal Credit is being rolled out across the country and is due to start in Loughborough in July 2018. We are anticipating a lot of issues will be faced by clients, particularly in cases where the client has little or no English and doesn't have IT skills. We will work with our partners to ensure minimum negative impact for our service users.

Case Study A

Mr P who suffers from mental illness was receiving Disability living Allowance. With changes to the Welfare Benefits system, Mr P had to re-apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) which is replacing Disability Living Allowance. Mr P had his assessment carried out by PIP and was refused. We wrote on his behalf challenging the decision and asking for re-consideration with further proof from his GP about his illness. Following our intervention, Mr P was awarded his PIP.

Immigration

Due to Brexit we have a surge in our European clients coming to our organisation to apply for their Registration Certificate or Residence Card.

We helped Mr X apply for his Registration Certificate for his family and himself.

One of the criteria is the qualified person has to be working in the UK to make the application. Although wage slips were included with the application, the Home Office did not believe that Mr X is genuinely working in the UK.

We worked with the client and gathered further evidence which was scanned and e-mailed to Home Office. After a week Mr X and his family received their Registration Certificates.



Debt and Money Management work

We delivered this work from August 2017 to March 2018 on behalf of Charnwood Borough Council. During the period we helped 50 people with debt problems (in some cases people need more than one appointment to deal with the matter and had to come back several times). Clients were helped to manage their income better and set up direct debits for regular payments. In a few cases we supported them to go to the Charnwood Citizen's Advice Bureau for more specialist debt advice.

Improving Lives Project (ILP)

Our 5 year Improving Lives Project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund is now in year 3.

It has been a great year for both the project and it's beneficiaries who have supported and continuously helped to make the project successful. From feedback received from our service users, mentors and steering group members, we design our action plan and each year organise various events, workshops and activities that reflect the purpose of the project and the needs of beneficiaries.

Men only swimming sessions

We are continuing with the men's only swimming sessions that take place at Charnwood College. Beneficiaries from different communities, backgrounds and ages come along with their sons (8+).

The sessions not only help them with physical fitness but also help them spend quality time with their sons, gives them an opportunity to meet men from other communities and promotes cross cultural friendships.

Taking on board feedback from the beneficiaries, we have included a level-2 instructor from year 2 that helps the men to improve their swimming skills.



Health awareness workshops 4 awareness raising workshops were held in partnership with Community Health and Learning (CHL) Foundation to raise the understanding of 50 men and look at conditions and support for Alzheimer's and Diabetes.



Beneficiaries receiving information on support available.

Another Dementia Friendly event was held at Fearon Hall in partnership with the Alzheimer's society where 10 men attended. A health fair held at Bangladesh Social Association, where Turning point, Cancer Research UK, Alzheimer Society Leicester Diabetes, CBC Sports & Active and Rosebery pharmacy participated to share information, build awareness, provide basic health support and checks. This promoted healthy eating during the month of Ramadan.

We were also supported by Rosebery Pharmacy who came along to carry out blood pressure tests and gave out freebies.

Picture on right - staff from Rosebery Pharmacy carry out a blood pressure check.

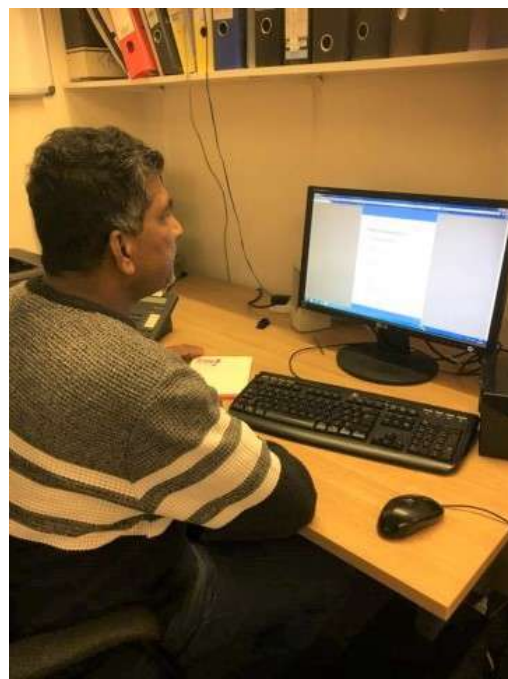


Picture below Advice on healthy eating during the month of Ramadan.



Information and communications technology (ICT), driving theory and pre-ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) sessions

We have continued to deliver 1-2-1 ICT sessions to 4 men during 2017-18 and 2 have since secured employment. 1-2-1 driving theory and pre-ESOL English sessions were delivered to 7 men, 2 of the men have started their practical driving lessons. 1 has joined mainstream ESOL classes following this learning.



London Buckingham Palace trip We organised a joint trip with the Chances For All women's project for 150 people (men, women and their families) on the 23rd August, 2017 to Buckingham Palace. Most had never been sightseeing in London and there was a huge interest in visiting Buckingham Palace; it helped them understand our heritage and was a good intercultural, intergenerational event.



Football Tournament

Our second 7 a-side football tournament took place on 17th September, 2017, with 6 teams from different ages, cultures and backgrounds. Many families came to support the players and the Mayor of Charnwood presented the trophies. This has become an annual much looked forward to event for our men's project and the next football tournament will be on 26th August, 2018.

Teams posing with the Mayor of Charnwood, Cllr Pauline Ranson



Winners of the tournament - LCS Zindabad



CV Writing workshop

7 men attended CV & Interview skills workshop in October 2017 in partnership with our local job centre.

Beneficiaries were given useful tips for job interviews and supported to update and prepare their CVs.



Improving Lives Project (ILP) Café

We have started a social café style session at Fearon Hall from 9th April every Monday (stopped during Ramadan). The main objective of this is to bring men from various ethnic backgrounds together to address the issues of interest e.g. health and well-being, skills development and community cohesion. Between 15 – 18 men regularly attend the sessions and have been learning and sharing their experiences through various activities.



PREVENT

Problem OR Solution?

Conference 13th September 2017

Equality Action, in partnership with Loughborough Council of Faiths and Charnwood Borough Council organised an event on 13th September 2017 at Rosebery St Peter's Community Centre. The event was free with over 60 people attending.

The event heard from key note speakers and gave local people a chance to have their say about the Prevent Strategy, learn about how it works in the local context and explore with others how we can address the challenges and concerns Prevent raises. A full report with recommendations is available from our office.



Questions and
comments raised
by attendees

Changing Face of Hate Crime Regional conference

We are a part of East Midlands Racial Equality Consortium (EMREC) and together with Northamptonshire Rights & Equalities Council and The Race Equality Centre (Leicester) organised a regional conference on the “Changing Face of Hate Crime” on 14th April 2018 at De Montfort University, Leicester. Our thanks to the University for the use of the venue. The event was funded by Awards For All, Big Lottery Fund.

Speakers included Lord Willy Bach, giving a Leicestershire perspective, Grace Moronfolu, Inclusion & Community Engagement Manager, East Midlands Crown Prosecution Service whose talk was on raising public awareness about the prosecution process in the fight against hate crime and Paul Giannasi from the Ministry of Justice UK who gave the UK’s approach to hate crime.

There was also a presentation from Ben Smith, Community Coordinator, Community Safety Team based at Leicester City Council, on what funding is available to help groups and Steven Brooks from Northamptonshire on how to challenge and remove hate material on social media.

The aim of the conference was to reach individuals and community groups to raise awareness of hate crime, what it means, the methods of reporting, what support is available and trying to encourage champions in community groups that can support others. Often people at grass root levels are afraid to report, don’t know what support is available, how and where to report and sometimes don’t have the confidence that their matter will be addressed.



Chances for All Project

The project has successfully delivered year 5 targets and ended in March 2018.

Some of the highlights of the year:

London Buckingham Palace trip

August 23rd 2017 a trip to Buckingham Palace was organised and was attended by 150 people . We combined with the men's project and it was a great family day out for the beneficiaries of both projects. Most who came had never been inside Buckingham Palace and were very eager to see it. They also did visits to other places of interest in London and spent a day making new friends from different backgrounds.



Enterprising Women in Charnwood Workshop

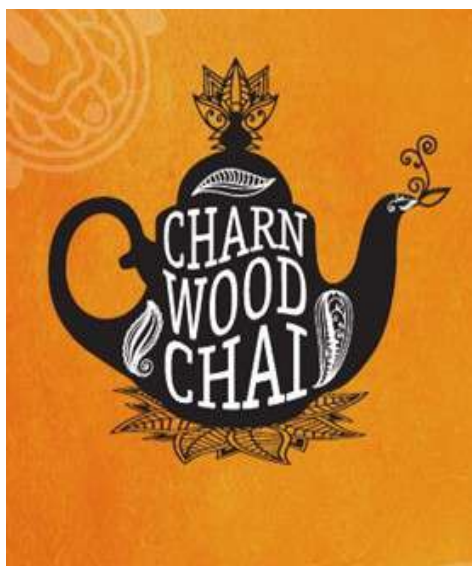
8 women attended a six week course on 'setting up your own business.' This was delivered by Co-operative & Social Enterprise Development Agency (CASE), who specialise in business advice and support.

Each woman had a different business idea and wanted to learn how to develop it and get it started. The course covered a topic each week including developing a business plan, the legal structure, policies and procedures, marketing and promotion, book keeping and raising finance.

Following the course, a group of women attended a funding panel of local and national funders where they gave a presentation of their business idea in a Dragons Den style pitch. The feedback received from the funders was very positive and as a result a social enterprise has been set up in the community by some of the women engaging with our project.



Charnwood Chai



A social enterprise project has been established by a group of local women in partnership with other community groups. This idea came following the increase in hate crime following Brexit. The aim was to bring people together over a cup of tea as this is a common interest in all cultures.

Following its launch, it has proved to be a success and is taken to many events including Picnic in the Park, Loughborough Mela, The Great Get Together, as well as smaller community events. The group has secured some funding to expand the project and invest in materials to expand the enterprise. The project has been promoted through the local press and this has attracted local businesses to come forward to offer their support.

Healthy cookery book

The 2 year long healthy cookbook project was finalised in year 5. This was a grant from Leicestershire County Council to produce a healthy cook book which came out of sessions held over the 2 years bringing over 70 local women together to share recipes and try to make the food they cook more healthier.

This mini project not only helped with their health but also brought women of different backgrounds together to learn about each others cultures, food and make new friends. The book was launched at our AGM in July 2017.

Healthy recipe book produced by project beneficiaries. Copies available from our office.



Mental Health First Aid Training

In Year 4, 10 people including 8 women attended a full 2 day intensive training course on Mental Health to become mental health first aiders. Prior to this, it was identified that there is a gap in the knowledge on this particular topic, especially within the Black Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) community. The training proved to be very useful and participants had better understanding on Mental Health.

Following this training, some of the women took part in a presentation at a local school to share their understanding of mental health with parents. They agreed that more people need to be educated on this matter and as it's something people don't fully understand and feel uncomfortable talking about.

Listening to local people from BAME, our research showed that mental health issues are regarded as taboo subjects and in many cases people are not aware of mental health in its various forms from depression, Dementia and Alzheimer's. Taking on this finding, we applied to the Big Lottery and have been successful in securing a 5 year project, "Positive Minds". This project will work with BAME people to raise awareness of mental health, build community champions who will help support and encourage others to understand and acknowledge these conditions. We will work with local partners to ensure support and help is available that is culturally appropriate and easy to access for sufferers and their carers.



Bangladeshi Women's Group

Chances For All helped to set up and empower groups for local BAME ladies to meet on a regular basis to learn a new activity or skill. There are now well established groups for Gujarati, Bengali and Arab women who have been meeting for several years and, through the support network within their group, they have been able to participate and develop their knowledge and confidence.

The Bangladeshi women's group has been led by volunteers within the community each with a talent or skill they were able to share with others.

Some of the activities include:

Making homemade face mask using natural ingredients and learning about the benefits.

Chair based Yoga for beginners

How to grow exotic vegetables successfully and share useful gardening tips. This followed by a trip to a special education garden centre in Coventry

Needle work activities including knitting, crocheting and sewing.



Chances For All embroidery banner produced by project beneficiaries

International Women's Day

On the 8th of March 2018 the women organised an event to celebrate International women's day in partnership with the My way English project. 50 women of all backgrounds, ages and cultures attended the event. Learning was the theme of the event. We had a quiz that was a great ice breaker as it encouraged the ladies from the My way English course to practice their English language skills. There was a lovely buffet for the women to enjoy and they heard about the Suffragettes exhibition and display that was in the local Museum and Library.



These pictures are of ladies taking part in these sessions.



Minara Rahman & Yesmin Choudhury
CFA Project Officers

English My Way

We successfully delivered a short term course for women from different background who had little or no English skills. This was funded by the Good Things Foundation, “English My Way” programme.

40 women enrolled and attended weekly classes, one at Fearon Hall and the other at the Bangladesh Social Association. The tutors spoke Bengali and Arabic and were able to help the women learn basic pre ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Language).

This helped them gain skills in written and spoken English as well as build their confidence so that they could progress to mainstream ESOL classes once they finish this course. The women were taught in a fun and innovative way and thoroughly enjoyed the sessions. For many, it was the highlight of their week, giving them an opportunity to meet other women and make new friends.

The sessions helped the women learn how to make doctors’ appointments over the phone, book taxis, train tickets, call the school if their child was ill etc. This course was designed to help ladies reach and access course like the ESOL entry level 1 and 2 which would help them to gain other recognised qualifications.



Above: Classes at Bangladesh Social Association.



Below: Classes at Fearon Hall



Awards ceremony held at the Ramada Hotel on 17th April where the Mayor of Charnwood, Cllr Pauline Ranson presented the ladies with certificates.

Training events

Peace Project

The Peace project took place over 8 days starting Saturday 16th September 2017. It was an Erasmus+ training programme funded by the British Council.

The Project brought together 30 volunteers from different parts of Europe to learn about each other's culture so that they could play an active role in bringing about Peace. The programme started with an intercultural evening where each country shared food, drinks and facts about their country with the rest of the participants.



The project also included debate with faith representatives, visits to faith venues in Leicester and training on UK Prevent Strategy (see picture below)



A Finnish participant wrote the following on his blog:

Robin's thoughts: To note, Loughborough became LOVEborough in our minds. The plays and the games (also known as energizers) were massively important and fun!

In order for the group to loosen up and work more efficiently together we needed those. It was a fun way to get to know each other, to keep the brain sharp and focused for the different tasks in hand.

About the learning of different cultures. Even knowing which countries would participate, I did not expect that we would be so different. In fact, after the experience, I think all of us who participated share in some core sense the same culture. #WellDuh The differences in my mind were superficial but enjoyed learning about these differences still! Tasting each other's culinary wonders (also in liquid form) is a fun and good way to bond!

I think, personally, the real experiencing of different cultures came when we got to familiarise with Asian religions, places of worship, rituals/traditions, and different Asian food dishes.



Participants received their Youth Pass certificate from the Mayor of Charnwood, Cllr Pauline Ranson.

Understanding Diversity

A 7 day residential international training course Understanding Diversity took place 22-30 October 2017. 27 participants came from nine European countries - UK, Greece, France, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Turkey and Latvia. The aim was to develop their competencies in the area of cultural diversity and inclusion and to educate a new generation of youth workers that would have a range of competencies to respond to the challenges Europe is facing today, especially in regard to the integration process of the refugee/migrant/ minority groups in their community and promotion of cultural diversity.



The project was funded by Erasmus+ Programme. The training team led by project manager Nadja Rein successfully delivered the programme using non formal educational methods combined with theoretical input.

The needs of the participants were assessed on the first day and the programme was adjusted to ensure that all of them were met. Reflection meetings were held everyday and the mid term and final evaluation, as well as the star of outcomes, compared the knowledge and confidence of the participants before and after the project.

It also demonstrated that the participants significantly broadened their understanding of cultures, reasons and causes of migration and immigration, legal frameworks linked with cultural diversity. Participants were inspired by many shared ideas for the work with young people in their countries and with communities focusing on integration of migrant and immigrant communities in the local communities.

The participants thoroughly enjoyed their participation in a local Pilgrimage of Prayers event, part of One World Week project.

They also improved their knowledge in planning sessions for activities when working with cultural diversity or addressing topics of immigration and had a chance to practice their skills, which was also highly commented in the final evaluation forms.

Comments from the funders:

‘The report demonstrates that the project was highly relevant to the aims of the Erasmus+ programme and the annual priorities in particular.

It is positive that the needs of the participating individuals were taken into account when formulating the programme content and that appropriate and relevant adjustments were made to meet these needs. It is good to see that time was dedicated to sharing and reflecting on the participants individual working contexts and how best to positively impact the people they engage with.’



Participants working together and sharing knowledge.



Nadja Rein
Project Co-ordinator

Loughborough Mela

Loughborough Mela 2017 was held on 13th August 2017. This annual event has risen in prominence from a small event celebrating the town's cultural and ethnic diversity into a popular and important date in the calendar of the summer festival season. Taking place in Town Centre in the heart of the community of Loughborough, there is more to Loughborough Mela than just music. The event also features stalls, fairground rides, a diverse range of food, children's activities and a diverse entertaining programme. The aim is to ensure that all visitors, young and old, will find something to entertain at this free event.

The Mela is a partnership event organised by Charnwood Borough Council, Equality Action, John Storer Charnwood, Charnwood Arts and local community groups and individuals. It is the perfect place to experience South Asian arts and culture in all its diverse and colourful forms, from spectacular Bollywood dancing to storytelling, poetry and henna painting. The aim is to celebrate both the performers' national heritage as well as their more recent history as British citizens.

Melas originate from the Indian sub-continent (the word 'Mela' means 'to meet' in Sanskrit, the ancient Indian language), where they are traditionally a gathering of people celebrating their community, much like village fairs in Britain.



Local Mansha Dance group performing at the Mela 2017.

This year's Mela is on Sunday 19th August in Loughborough Town Centre, Market Square, from 12 noon to 5 pm.

Contact us for more details:
loughboroughmela@gmail.com
tel 01509 261651.

This is a community event and we need your support.

Loughborough MELA
19th August, Sunday, 2018
Loughborough Town Centre
12:00pm-5:00pm
For enquiries, please contact
01509261651
loughboroughmela@gmail.com

ARIS
equality action
John Storer Charnwood
Charnwood

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Varsha Parmar	Executive Officer
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Yesmin Choudhury	Chances For All Project Officer
Mehraj Alamgir	Improving Lives Project Officer
Kazi Mashud	Improving Lives Project Officer & Volunteer Adviser
Chayara Chowdhury	Volunteer Adviser
Amina Wadud	Volunteer Adviser
Nadja Rein	European Projects Co-ordinator

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Hon Solicitor
Hon Treasurer

The Mayor of Charnwood
 Mr D Pagett-Wright (Moss Solicitors)
 Mr T Shaw

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Brahma Kumari	M Sisodia	N Steel
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L'boro Constituency Labour Party	M Draycott	J Vincent
L'boro Council of Faiths	N Steele	
L'boro United Reformed Church	D Beale	T Payne
L'boro University	A Akram	M Alonso
L'boro University		
(Centre for Faith & Spirituality)	J Sutton	C Taylor
Rawlins Academy	C Ore	H Fern
Rosebery St Peter's C C	D Bentley	L Foukes

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We would like to thank all our funders for the generous grants that enable us to continue with our work

