



# Redbridge Equalities and Community Council

## Annual Report 2021– 2022



Registered Charity No: 1170313

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

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Our thanks to RECC's main funders in 2021-22:



## Mayor's foreword



Redbridge Equalities and  
Community Council  
Room 203  
Heraldic House  
160-162 Cranbrook Road  
Ilford  
Essex IG1 4PE

The Honorable Mayor of Redbridge  
Mayor's Office  
Town Hall  
Ilford IG1 1DD

020 8708 2110/2297  
mayorsoffice@redbridge.gov.uk

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022

I am very pleased to have been asked to become the president of Redbridge Equality and Community Council for 2022-23. This organisation has been active in the London Borough of Redbridge for over 50 years promoting equalities for all of the borough's communities as well as working to bring communities together.

Redbridge enjoys a rich diversity of communities, and this is our strength.

RECC has worked very hard throughout the year to promote and establish good relationships between our different communities. I am very excited to learn that the Reaching Communities Project is continuing to take this important work forward. I am pleased to know that RECC has secured vital funding from the National Lottery to enable this work.

I am aware also of the important work that RECC has done to support victims of Hate Crime and to advocate for them. They have also continued to provide a vital Advice, Advocacy and Support Service for members of our communities over a wide range of issues.

We know that Hate Crime is, sadly, still with us and that there are challenges to community cohesion. We face social and economic challenges, such as the cost of living crisis, which have effect an on mental health. This is why organisations like RECC are vitally important to us.

RECC has come through difficult times including the COVID crisis and funding difficulties, but they have survived and emerged stronger. I am sure that they will continue to be a great asset for the borough and to all our communities.

I wish to express my gratitude to the board of Trustees, the officers and all of the volunteers for the work you do for the residents of Redbridge. Well done and thank you to all of you.

Mayor of Redbridge 2022-23  
Councillor Thavathuray Jeyaranjan

## Who we are

Redbridge Equalities and Community Council

Room 203, Heraldic House

160-162 Cranbrook Road

Ilford IG1 4PE

Tel: 020 8551 8178

Email: [office1@redbridgetequalities.org.uk](mailto:office1@redbridgetequalities.org.uk)

Website: [www.redbridgetequalities.org](http://www.redbridgetequalities.org)

### Chair

John Ward

### Vice Chair

Diana Neslen

### Treasurer

Jatinder Saini

## STAFF TEAM 2021-22

Cecelia Rufus Equalities Coordinator Outreach and Advice

Mai Anwar Reaching Communities Project Officer

Khadra Mohammed Finance Officer

Razwana Wahid Equalities Coordinator Hate Crime and Cohesion

Marek Wesolowski Equalities Coordinator Hate Crime and Cohesion

Anne Hayfield Equalities Coordinator Hate Crime and Cohesion  
(to November 2021)

Reema Huzair Equalities Coordinator Hate Crime and Cohesion  
(to March 2021)

## VOLUNTEERS

Lirie Haxhiu Alex Arulanandam Christine Hibbert Hyacinth Osborne

Aneela Rajput James Rufus Razwana Wahid

Suraya Sohail Marek Wesolowski Sharon Cypal

Nellas David

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021 -2022

### Trustees serving for three years from 2019-2022

Jatinder Saini (served 2 terms) John Ward (served 2 terms )

Noorjahan Begum JoAnne McConnell

### Trustees serving for three years from 2020-2023

Isha Isidore Diana Neslen

### Trustees serving for three years from 2021-2024

Ferzanah Ahmed Sharika Alam Isabelle Ercan Surinder Pahl

### London Borough of Redbridge representatives 2021-22

CLlr Namreen Choudhry CLlr Michael Duffell CLlr Bob Littlewood

## Chair's Report



This will be my last report as Chair of RECC. I want to say that it has been an honour and a privilege to chair the organisation over the last two years. It has, at times, been a challenging experience but it has been a rewarding one. I need to start by expressing my personal gratitude, alongside that of the whole executive committee, to the tremendous work done by RECC's staff and their dedication to delivering outcomes in difficult circumstances. The staff report enclosed provides more detailed information about what has been delivered under our Hate Crime and our community outreach work over the course of the year. This work and the achievements made have only been possible because of the dedication of the staff, so once again, my thanks to them for all the tremendous work they have done.

Thank you, Cecelia Rufus for your Outreach and Advice work, as well as your support for other projects and the overall work of RECC.

Thank you, Mai Anwar, for the promising early work you have undertaken to get the Reaching Communities Project underway.

Thank you Khadra Mohammed for your vital administrative Work.

There are two more people I would particularly like to thank. Our Hate Crime project was in some difficulty delivering the project outcomes due to staffing difficulties. Two of our long-standing Community Witnesses were able to step in and help us to deliver our objectives. Thank you, Marek Wesolowski and Razwana Wahid for your work on this project.

I must also add my gratitude to our all of our volunteers who have also carried on in difficult circumstances.

We are, of course, grateful to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Communities (MOPAC) for funding our work to support victims of Hate Crime and to raise awareness. Sadly, that funding will not continue beyond this month. However, our anonymous donor, who has supported us in various ways over the years, has provided funding to enable us to continue this work, albeit in a reduced way. We thank Trust for London for their support and the funding they have provided to date which enables our outreach work. We are also grateful to the London Borough of Redbridge for their support, via the Safer Communities Partnership, for our Hate Crime work. Many friends and members of RECC have contributed via the Charities Aid foundation or directly and we are immensely grateful for your continuing support.

Finally, I must thank my colleagues on the Executive Committee, my fellow trustees for everything you have done as a group and individually to support RECC and to support me during my time as Chair. I am particularly grateful to my predecessor, Nigel Turner for his continued guidance and support, to Diana Neslen for her support as Vice Chair and to Jatinder Saini for his role as Treasurer and the financial expertise he has contributed. Thanks again to everyone, staff, volunteers, trustees, members and friends for your support through difficult times and your contribution to our continued success.

John Ward - Chair

## Staff Report

RECC despite the challenges we have faced during Covid and as we have emerged into a post Covid world, we have continued to provide vital services, including to the most vulnerable in our Redbridge Community with a wide range of projects and services.

### Hate Crime Project

This project has been funded by the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) through the London Community Foundation, to June 2022. We are extremely thankful to MOPAC for an extension of the funding period to allow for new project workers to continue the delivery of the project following Anne's departure who worked hard to deliver the project. We are extremely thankful to Razwana Wahid and Marek Wesolowski who are currently working hard to continue deliver the projects services. We are also thankful to MOPAC Safer Communities Partnership small grants administered by RCVS. Since the departure of Senior caseworker David Landau, Cecelia has led the hate crime project providing support with her many years of experience to the project staff and volunteers. The project has several aspects of service which blend together to provide support to victims of hate crime and harassment. These are providing an advice and advocacy service for victims of hate crime, and also community engagement.

Key areas of work for this project are:

- **Hate Crime work**– providing advice and advocacy with casework to victims of hate crime
- **Raising hate crime awareness in the community** – talks to schools, groups and places of worship
- **Community Witness and Support Team** – to visit and support victims of hate crime
- **Developing Mutual Support Groups** – to provide support and end isolation for hate crime victims.

### Hate Crime Casework

Our Hate Crime casework provides essential advice advocacy and casework for victims of Hate Crime. Many of our clients have multi complex needs and face barriers to health and other areas. Many of our clients are traumatised by their experiences with many facing ongoing hate crime for many years. A major part of hate crime casework involves getting the agencies involved to take the appropriate enforcement action e.g the Police or Enforcement Team of a council or housing provider to issue the relevant enforcement notices or warnings. Also, another regular aspect of the casework includes requests for rehousing and relocation to a different area for the client's safety and assisting people to make reports by accompanying clients to the police station to support them to make reports 'in person' and also assisting people to make reports online.

Many of our clients are experiencing trauma and need considerable support. We have developed remote digital platforms to support our case work such as whats app mutual support groups and whats app casework support whereby clients can send 'real time'

messages, information, photographic evidence to support their casework allowing for ease of access to support and information exchange during and outside working hours.

### **Discrimination Casework**

Discrimination casework continues to be a very much needed part of our work. For many years despite, the lack of funding we continue to do discrimination casework. We have had employment cases come to us, but we do not deal with employment issues and therefore we refer on except in very straightforward cases where we can give basic advice. Over half of our cases continue to be around disability discrimination in housing where reasonable adjustments need to be made for our clients or rehousing into suitable accommodation.

### **Outreach Advice, Advocacy and Casework Service**

We are extremely fortunate to secure continuation funding for a further three years to 2025 from Trust for London for our outreach, advice, advocacy, and casework. Despite, the challenges of Covid we have continued to provide vital services helping vulnerable, economically, disadvantaged and isolated communities to access much needed help and support.

Our **telephone advocacy and advice service** and outreach advice surgeries continue to bring advice straight to the community making it easily accessible for people to get the help and support they need. Early on in our work over the two years we have seen that digital exclusion has been a big challenge for people who do not have a laptop and also for those who do not have android phones. Because of this, we made Whatsapp remote messaging available for people to send instant messages where they can access advice and support from their mobile phones. For example, housing letters, notices of eviction letters, enforcement action letters received from bailiffs who are in attendance at the property. Also, our home visits which have significantly increased provide essential support to clients who have no access to computers or android phones to access their UC journals and complete online forms. We have also developed innovative approaches to set up casework support Whats app groups with an interpreter support to translate our messages on the group message and also clients' messages are also translated so there is instant two-way communication.

Our telephone conferencing has provided a huge success in providing vital access, immediate help and support to our clients where we advocate on their behalf with agencies and services. This involves a triangulation of calls, connecting the client to service providers, with us advocating on their behalf. And in some cases when needed, we also connect interpreters to the conference call to help communicate with the client, whilst the client is on the call that we have connected via conference, so that we can speak directly to the service provider to resolve client cases. Many times, the issue can be successfully resolved in just one call. We connect calls via conferencing to a wide range of agencies and service providers for a wide range of issues. For example, conference calls with Universal credit Team, challenging benefit underpayments, overpayments or cessation of benefits; ESA or employment work capability requests or reconsideration; conference calls with Council Tax Recovery Team to stop enforcement action and Council Tax reduction applications, single



person discount requests; conferencing to help people secure temporary housing and resettlement for those facing homelessness, help the street homeless access housing provision; conferencing to help people deal with rent arrears and threat of eviction and poor living conditions with severe pest infestation; help people facing general debt recovery problems; conference calls connecting vulnerable clients with chronic health conditions/ disabilities to GPs to access primary health care treatment; conference calls with specialist agencies to provide support in urgent and complex need areas such as domestic violence.

This method of advocacy continues to be in high client demand as we directly link our clients to the relevant agencies to access support in combination with casework support of powerful written challenges via email and written submissions made on our client's behalf. And also escalating cases requesting Parliamentary representations and also Ombudsman representations. We are extremely busy as a service as result of the high levels of housing, welfare, debt management and many other complex cases needing help and assistance, and even more so, especially as agencies such as the CAB are already oversubscribed.

The combination of this work and time and effort invested has been extremely rewarding and challenging in which Cecelia has continued to work tirelessly, working on many occasions long and unsocial hours on many extremely complex cases providing vital support to the community whilst continually developing the service to provide innovative and a wide range of essential services to support our clients. We hope with further funding we can employ at least two to three members of staff to help deal with the increasing workload and volume of cases coming through to our service.

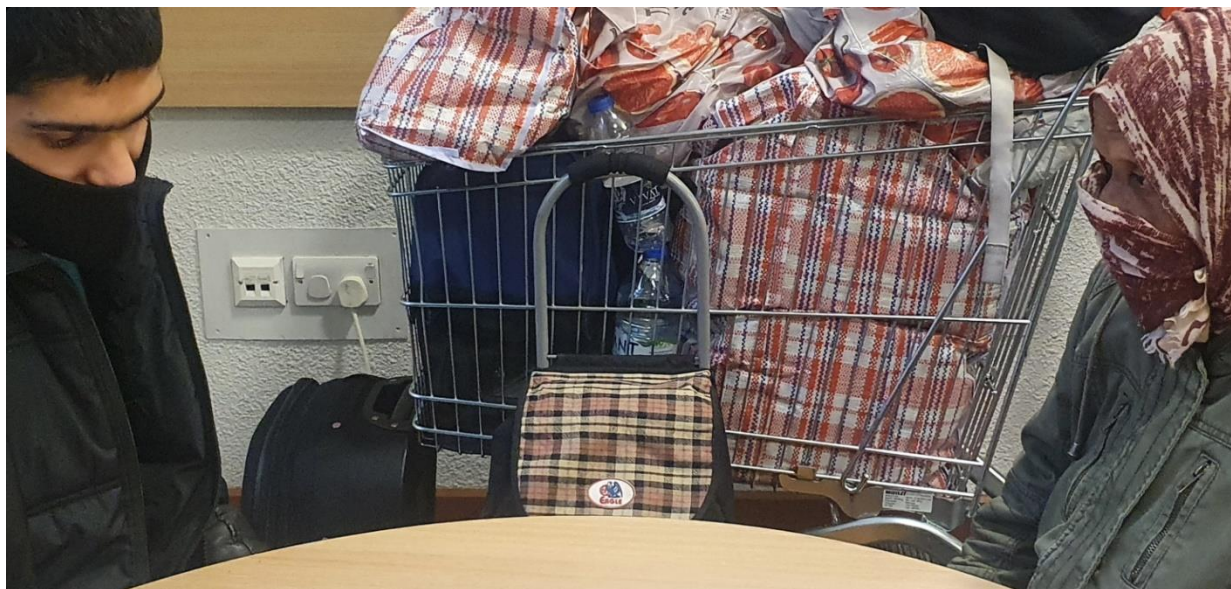
The key areas of the Outreach, Advice and Advocacy Service are:

- **Outreach advice surgeries and Street outreach** -bringing direct advice help and support to the community.
- **Telephone advice** – Providing remote and digital support to our clients
- **Advocacy and casework**- Providing advocacy acting as an intermediary with complex casework supporting clients with multi complex needs.
- **Referrals and signposting**- Advice work will include signposting clients or making referrals to appropriate agencies. In some ongoing cases with multicomplex needs where needed, we will make referrals to specialist organisations or for legal support.
- **Home visits** - provide direct advice support to those with disabilities, physical and mental health conditions and chronic illness, clients with multiple problems and complex needs.
- **McKenzie friend service** – We attend tribunal, court hearings, client representation at Panels providing client advocate support.
- **Community Representation**- Informed by our work we participate in boards, services panels helping to be a voice for all in the community for equal and fair access to services.

Much of this work consist of ongoing complex casework which generates a very demanding caseload for Cecelia. We are proud that we never turned anyone away and if it is something not within our remit, we always signpost/refer to another organisation who can help.

## Street Outreach

We are in our fifth year of work with the street homeless. The street outreach surgeries have continued to evolve – with referrals in addition to direct street outreach work where we give advice to homeless people on the street and help them to gain access to housing and other support provision. This is difficult and extremely rewarding work would not be possible without the assistance of our volunteers.



## Case Studies and Statistics - Outreach, Advice, Advocacy and Casework services

We have assisted many people with advice, advocacy and/or signposting, impacting on over 350 beneficiaries per year. We have achieved some great successes, continuing to transform many lives. 98% of respondents to User Satisfaction Questionnaires continue to say that they are satisfied with the help we have given them and that our support and direct interventions have enabled them to access services they had been unable to reach without our help and support.

Please see the following example of the type of cases in which we act as an intermediary, the advocacy provided and challenges we make on our client's behalf

### Casework example: Social Housing Eviction of family - street homeless

*In February 2022 at one of our Advice Surgeries at Central Library, as soon as my colleague Mai and I arrived, we were informed of an emergency case waiting to be seen of clients who had been evicted by their Housing Association. The clients, a mother and her 19-year-old son endured the most awful experience of being street Homeless the night before! The library staff informed us that before we arrived, they were absolutely freezing cold and in a terrible condition and the staff showed both mother and son to the toilets facilities so that they could clean themselves up when the library opened that morning. It must also be mentioned that both Library staff and users were extremely upset and concerned about the welfare of this family. We did numerous calls to try to help them gain access to accommodation. Both Redbridge Housing Services including LBR Out of Hours provision refused to provide emergency accommodation, stating LBR had 'no duty' on the grounds the mother and her son had made themselves intentionally homeless, because they were aware that the Housing*

*Association had discharged their duty because they had failed to attend two property viewings at the same property. The situation was even more dire for the mother and son because Ryedale the only Night shelter Provision in Redbridge was closed for refurbishment leaving the mother and her son refused of all emergency accommodation in Redbridge with no other source of help! We made numerous calls throughout the whole time trying to call the Housing Association as well as speaking to Redbridge. By this time, it was quite late in the evening and the library was soon to close. When we got through, we spoke to the Housing Association management who refused to rehouse them, stating they were not prepared to reverse their decision. We advocated on our client's behalf stating that attending a viewing and accepting a property offer for a move to alternative housing are two separate things and a viewing may not have been clearly understood by the mother and son as an obligatory and mandatory move into a new property, especially as the letters we saw did not state any consequences would happen to them if they did not make the viewing. We also too explained that the mother, as well as being able unable to speak English, appeared to have a learning disability which needed to be assessed and was also suffering trauma as a Domestic Violence victim in addition to further trauma as a result of being left to in live in awful and extremely dangerous living conditions with collapsed ceilings and other major disrepair for many years in the Housing Association property by her husband. The Housing Association stated when they became aware of her situation the Housing Association took steps to urgently rehouse the mother and her 19-year-old son. We also explained that as an organisation we deal with hard to reach, marginalised, isolated and vulnerable communities using approaches in communication, participation, engagement to break isolation, build inclusion, gain trust and that it is crucial to use trauma informed approaches for those who are traumatised as a result of Domestic Violence. We stated the mother would have needed almost daily communication and engagement to build trust until the move was made. We also explained our extreme concerns for their safety that the mother who was 65 years of age, extremely frail with type 2 diabetes may not be able to survive any more nights on the streets. With this advocacy we managed to gain their agreement to review their decision but because they do not have emergency accommodation, they could not accommodate the mother and son. We also stated the above representations in an email. Street link were contacted that night, we referred the clients and we managed to get Street link to agree to accept to conduct an urgent visit to the mother and son that night instead of the usual earliest time of 2 to 3 days. We contacted the family in early hours and thankfully they were accommodated pending their accommodation review.*

This case study shows the harsh realities people face and of work we do acting as an intermediary on client's behalf and the real difference we can make by our interventions.

Covid-19 and as we emerge from it has laid bare the many inequalities in our society and our support to our community is needed even more than ever at this time. Our projects aim to help our community, including the most vulnerable and marginalised communities to tackle hard challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis, poverty, deprivation, destitution and homelessness and systemic inequality and racism in all its forms and also to promote a harmonious society.



## Reaching Communities Project



One of the main aims of RECC is to challenge all forms of discrimination and prejudice and promote equality and good relations and we are extremely grateful for National Lottery funding which will allow us to continue our social cohesion work over the next 5 years. The project focusses on two areas in Redbridge Hainault ward and Ilford North and Loxford ward and Ilford South as they both are considered to be the most deprived and divided areas in Redbridge. We aim to build cohesion in these two areas over following years with the establishment of vibrant Community Forums to bring communities together supported by activities, services and events with innovative ways to encourage community engagement and participation. The project began when the lead project worker Mai Anwar was recruited in November 2021. Mai has been working extremely hard to develop the Reaching Communities Project. Mai has been establishing networks and developing strong working relationships in both Hainault and Ilford North and Loxford and Ilford South wards. We have liaised with various schools, community groups and organisations in Redbridge, building networks within the borough and with other organisations in East London who also provide services in Redbridge. This work is focused on building a growing 'digital online' community as well as a 'face to face' network for the Reaching Communities Project. Good progress has been made in building networks with specialist organisations to increase the reach to marginalised, isolated and vulnerable communities to ensure they are included and feel part of the project. Mai also provides support to the Reaching Communities Project networks and users with extra individualised support through the Advice Surgeries.

The Community Forums held in May 2022 on zoom where a brilliant platform for the community to share their views in a 'safe welcoming space'. Themes for both forums for discussion was the cost-of-living crisis as well as sharing ideas for improvements in their



local areas. The aim of these forums is to bring all communities together to hear people's views about the services and unmet needs in their area so that they can be their voice for change with the Council, relevant organisations and institutions. We were very pleased residents from a range of communities, shared their views as well as expressed their concerns, in depth together and that they were also feeling hopeful to see how Reaching Communities Project can support them to make improvements and positive changes in their area. Mai has created a live Community survey on google docs. The results from survey were very useful in the Community Forum meeting held in May as it encouraged the residents to discuss their true feelings and living experiences in their area, raising concerns regarding limited resources and investment in their area compared to more richer and affluent areas in Redbridge. In future Community Forums at the community request will also involve participation from relevant local councillors, departments and organisations as well as provide specific workshops and activities to support the local community. Additionally, the attendees from both forums have expressed their appreciation for the research skills and efforts that was put into the Survey and its presentation. We aim to keep the survey opened to allow more residents to have opportunity to participate.

### **Reaching Communities Project Events and activities**



The Reaching Communities Project is working in collaboration with the Community Hub Programme Team on the Belonging Project and also with Forest Farm Peace Gardens World Musical Festival in which we participated with RECC stalls at the two separate outdoor summer events in Hainault in June, alongside stall holders, musicians and live entertainment. We hosted events on our stall for the community centered around music and the arts with an interactive display of musical instruments from Africa, Caribbean from RECC Black History Exhibition as well as musical artefacts and instruments from India,

Ireland and at the Belonging event we had an interactive community art board display for people to paint, draw or scribe words or themes of inspiration for their community. As part of the Reaching Communities Programme, we will be using music and the arts to bring people from all communities together. We hope to have a large event later this year in Ilford South and Ilford North.

### **Fundraising**

We have continued to receive tremendous support from our donors. We are profoundly grateful for their ongoing support to our organisation. We would like to extend our great appreciation to them all. In addition, we would like to continue to thank one of our longest donors who has provided donations for over 21 years who has been a tremendous support to our organisation all these years.

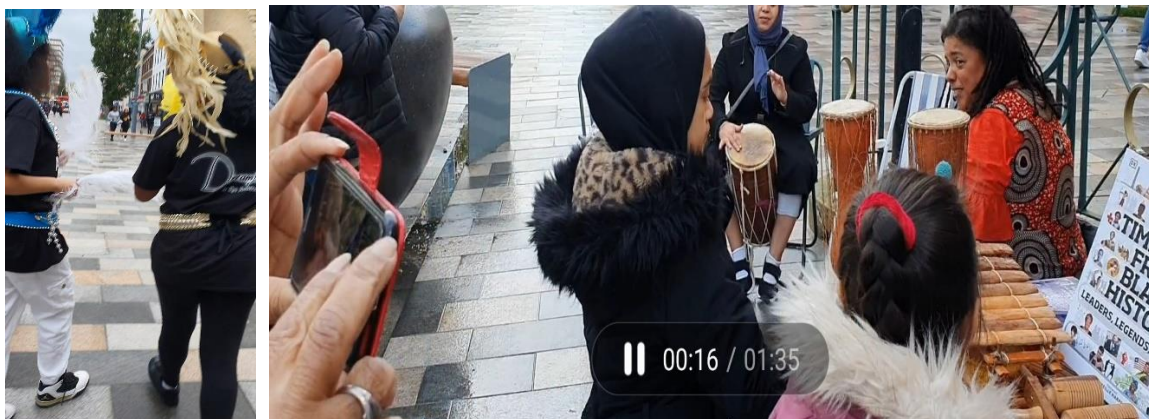
We have also had tremendous support from School 21 young student volunteers who helped give their time in kind to help the Reaching Communities Project develop the publicity materials and distribution of the questionnaires with residents in Ilford North and Ilford South. Their work with us has helped the young people develop a deeper sense of equalities and human rights, learn decision making, develop civic pride and understand the meaning of community spirit.

We also like to thank our CAF Bank donors who have been donating to our organisation for many years with their donations and also to our anonymous donor who has committed funds behind our hate crime projects and also the Equalities Forum in previous years.

We have been approached by a new organisation delivering the NCS programme whom in the past helped to fundraise through their campaigns for our organisation. We look forward to continuing this work with NCS Programme in future programmes later this year.

### **STALLS AND EVENTS**

Last year as part of the BHM Committee of planned events RECC hosted our Grand Finale Black History Celebrations on the 29<sup>th</sup> October with a Grand Finale Carnival Parade with dancers from Adannas youth network, Live Steel Pan and Drumming performances with Drumming and Steel Pan Workshops for the community to enjoy. Also, our RECC Black History Stall show casting authors, musical instruments and artefacts. The event brought a vibrant and spectacular close to the Black History events held across Redbridge in October 2021.







### **Staff Thanks**

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all project staff, volunteers and trustee's past and present for their tremendous hard work, fantastic support, dedication and commitment.

Thank you to Khadra Mohammed for Administration support as our dedicated Finance Officer.

Special thanks to John Ward for his tremendous work as Chair and Jatinder Saini for his tremendous support as Treasurer who both have come to an end to their two consecutive three year terms.

### **Report completed by**

**Cecelia Rufus**

**Mai Anwar**

**July 2022**

## Governance

Since our previous unincorporated charity (Registration number 1002357) was formally removed from the Register of Charities on 23 June 2020 with all assets fully transferred to Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Registration number 1170313) which succeed it. RECC's trustees are trustees of this Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

COVID-19 Resolution: RECC Governance has updated its provisions to include Online/Virtual meetings.

## Reserves Policy

1. It is RECC's policy to maintain an appropriate level of financial reserves to ensure that it is able to meet its financial obligations and, as far as possible, to maintain continuity of service provision.
2. RECC will maintain a **Restricted Reserve**, made up as follows:
  - Three months' rent and other office expenses
  - Costs of expected redundancies
  - Costs of staff's entitlement to notice
  - A reasonable sum to cover other contingencies.
3. Reserves exceeding the restricted reserve will form an **Unrestricted Reserve**.
4. At the end of every financial year, and whenever else it is necessary to do so, the Treasurer will report to the Trustees on the level of the Restricted and Unrestricted Reserves and their compliance with this policy. The Trustees may decide to transfer funds to or from the Restricted Reserve to maintain consistency with paragraph 2 above.







