

Impact Report

2024/25

rmc



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Report collated and written by RMC Impact and Evaluation Manager, **Jasmyn Dixon**. With thanks to our partners and colleagues for their contributions and to our beneficiaries who allowed us to share their stories.

Special thanks to **Craig Hands** for his contributions to the report.

Some names and photos within the stories have been changed for confidentiality.

Foreword

When all is said and done, The Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) role is simple but vital: to be an open door for thousands of human beings in real need.

We help people rebuild their lives or at the very least, find some respite from pain and trauma. Across the region, our colleagues work tirelessly every day to support people who often have nowhere else to turn, and no one else in their corner.

The work is becoming ever more complex and demanding, and the wider environment less compassionate yet we continue to rise to the challenge.

Supporting more than 19,000 beneficiaries in a single year with rather limited resources is no easy task. But RMC does it through a can-do attitude, a whole-person approach and a really broad remit.

Our strength lies in the depth of expertise and experience we've built over 25 years. It's the ability to deliver both quality and scale and to respond quickly in times of crisis that makes RMC the trusted organisation it is today, for both the communities we serve and the partner agencies we work with.

Organisations often have elaborate visions and missions but at its core, what RMC stands for is fairness and justice: two of the most fundamental values in British society.

If you wish to understand how we do what we do and the enormous impact our colleagues make every day please read on.

Arten Lazari, RMC CEO



About RMC

Our Vision

A society where newcomers feel welcome, valued and lead dignified lives.

Our Mission

We act with humanity and compassion, knowing that with the right support and opportunities, people can thrive and become equal citizens.

Our Values

We are guided by our core values of empowerment, inclusion, quality and collaboration, which underpin all our actions and decisions.

Empowerment

RMC strive, with compassion and respect, to enable all those we serve to reach their aspirations. We empower individuals and build their confidence and independence, allowing them to shape their own futures and make informed decisions.

Inclusion

RMC are led by people with lived experience, we respect diversity and are committed to equality. Inclusion is at the heart of our work, ensuring that everyone feels valued and heard. This inclusive approach helps break down barriers and builds a sense of belonging and community.

Quality

RMC aspire to deliver excellent, ever improving services and respond holistically to our beneficiaries needs. This dedication to quality improves individual outcomes and strengthens trust within the community.

Collaboration

RMC work collaboratively to achieve our mission. We are proud to work with our partners, sharing expertise and learning from one another. By working together, we can provide comprehensive support and find creative solutions to the challenges faced by our beneficiaries.

Why we exist

The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) is a charity committed to supporting refugees and migrants across the West Midlands, with offices in Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Our purpose is to empower the communities we serve through education and integration support, enabling individuals to live as equal citizens. Our service offers comprehensive assistance to a diverse range of beneficiaries, including asylum seekers, refugees, EU migrants, undocumented individuals, and those with uncertain immigration status. One beneficiary stated RMC is the “door to humanity”.

RMC are driven by the desire to address the barriers our beneficiaries face. These barriers include:



Digital exclusion



Complex systems to navigate



Language barriers



Low confidence

Our team at RMC, aided by over 70 volunteers, fill the service gap for free, expert immigration advice and vital support needed to overcome these barriers. Our team of highly qualified caseworkers and advisors, accredited up to Level 3 by the Immigration Advice Authority (IAA), understand that access to free immigration advice and casework is the cornerstone of full integration, enabling individuals to contribute to society and live independently.

RMC aim to simplify the integration journey by providing a wide variety of assistance in one place, whilst building strong relationships with external organisations to facilitate any help we cannot provide in-house.



Our Strategy

To achieve our mission and vision, RMC have developed a comprehensive strategy for 2024-2029, focusing on delivery, partnerships, and our people, ensuring we remain strong and proactive through times of volatility and hardship. We have two key goals for the next five years:

1 Be a trusted, free, high quality, compassionate source of support at least 50,000 times for people in the West Midlands

2 Ensure RMC thrives as a diverse, collaborative, reflective charity, rooted in our values and communities

We have separated our goals into delivery - focusing on help provided to our beneficiaries, and development- focusing on advancing our staff, developing our service, and building our partnerships. These goals have underpinned our priorities in 2024/25, as we advanced areas of our work, while continuously listening to the needs of our beneficiaries and the current socio-political climate.

As RMC go into the next year, we will continue action planning according to this strategy, and updating our goals where necessary, ensuring work continues towards our core vision.

Meeting the need

Our work is rooted in listening to the communities we serve. RMC recognise that people's needs are not static, particularly for those navigating insecure immigration systems, crisis situations, or resettlement. Whether responding to changes in policy, rising costs of living, or sudden global events, our team remains agile and ready to adapt. RMC actively review our service delivery, gather feedback from our beneficiaries, and respond to emerging trends to ensure our support stays relevant and impactful to the communities we serve.

Key examples of RMC's adaptability in the past 12 months include:

- Increased digital access help in response to increasing services moving online
- Training staff to lead workshops and deal with immediate demand for eVisas
- Training and supporting professionals and partners on changes to immigration regulations, ensuring support services are giving up to date advice
- Beginning delivery of energy saving advice and support, reacting to the increased cost of living and local desire to positively impact the environment
- Creating resources and briefings on immigration changes to update our beneficiaries, including the changes to the citizenship Good Character requirement
- Piloting additional access routes as part of the Birmingham Sanctuary Hub

In the summer of 2024, RMC faced an unimaginable challenge when it was named as a target during the riots. In response, we acted swiftly to safeguard our staff and beneficiaries. This decisive action demonstrated our ability to remain calm and focused under pressure, prioritising safety above all. We were deeply moved by the peaceful counter-protest held outside our Birmingham office, a powerful display of community solidarity and support.

This adaptability allows us to be a trusted presence through uncertainty, providing quality community support no matter how circumstances shift.

Key Impact Data

19,380 Beneficiaries supported

Up 4.6% on last year

The highest number of beneficiaries supported in one year throughout our history

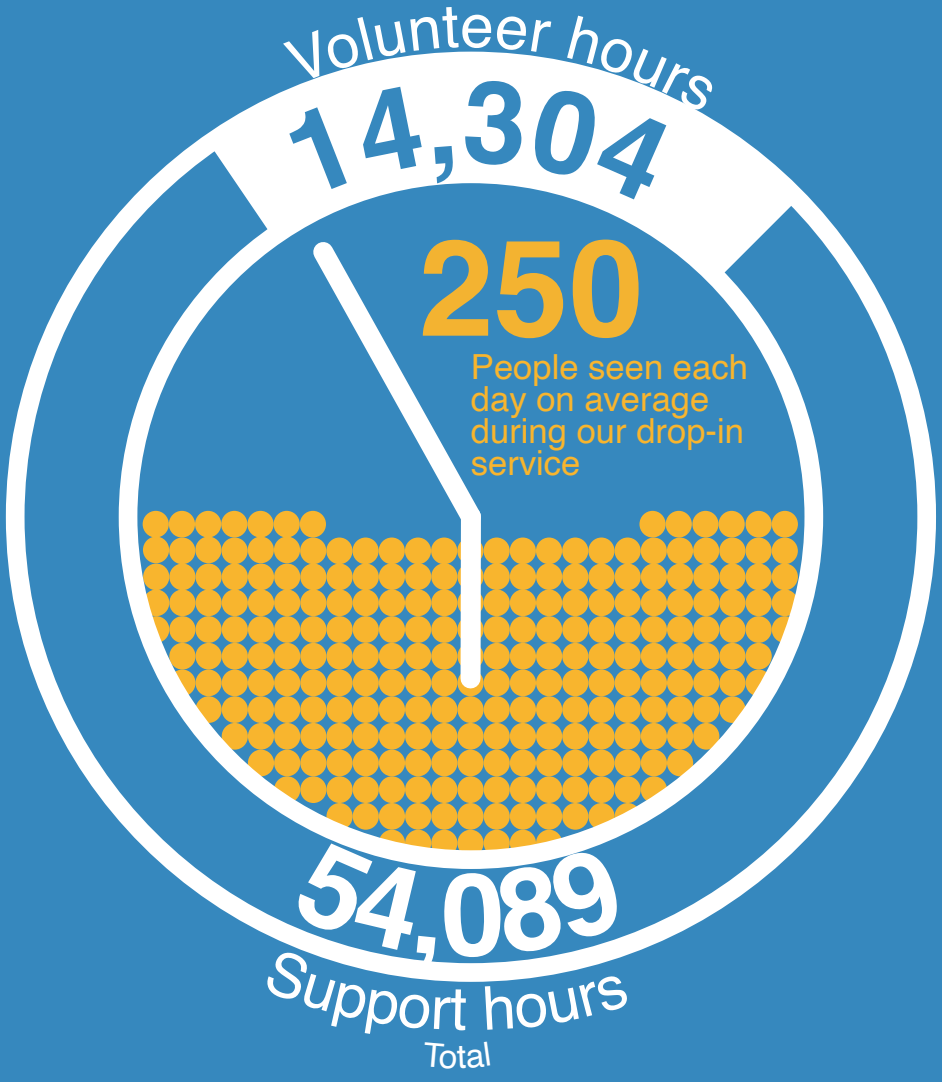
> *"Thanks to your [RMC's] guidance I am now living my life integrated within society as if I were born in the UK... I genuinely feel like a citizen"*
>
> *- RMC Beneficiary*

46,604
Enquiries
In total were dealt with by our expert team. Wide ranging assistance was provided to help people **from arrival to integration**.

333
Individuals
upskilled through our core internal ESOL classes. Building not only language skills but also confidence, independence, and community belonging

Average rating
For RMC workshops delivered to professionals, communities and beneficiaries to **provide additional knowledge** within the community

569
Individuals
arriving through government resettlement programmes supported to **resettle in the UK**



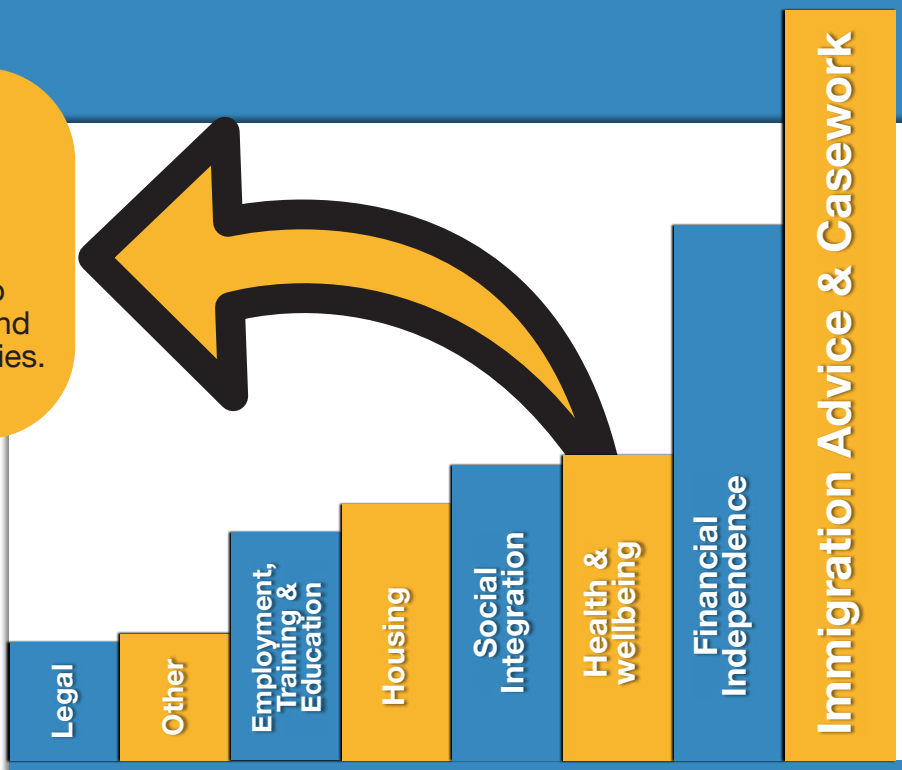
Support provided

Between 2024/25 we opened **40,849** new enquiries for our beneficiaries, which has steadily increased since 2020.

40

Individuals were trained by RMC to become Mental health First Aiders and can now support their own communities.

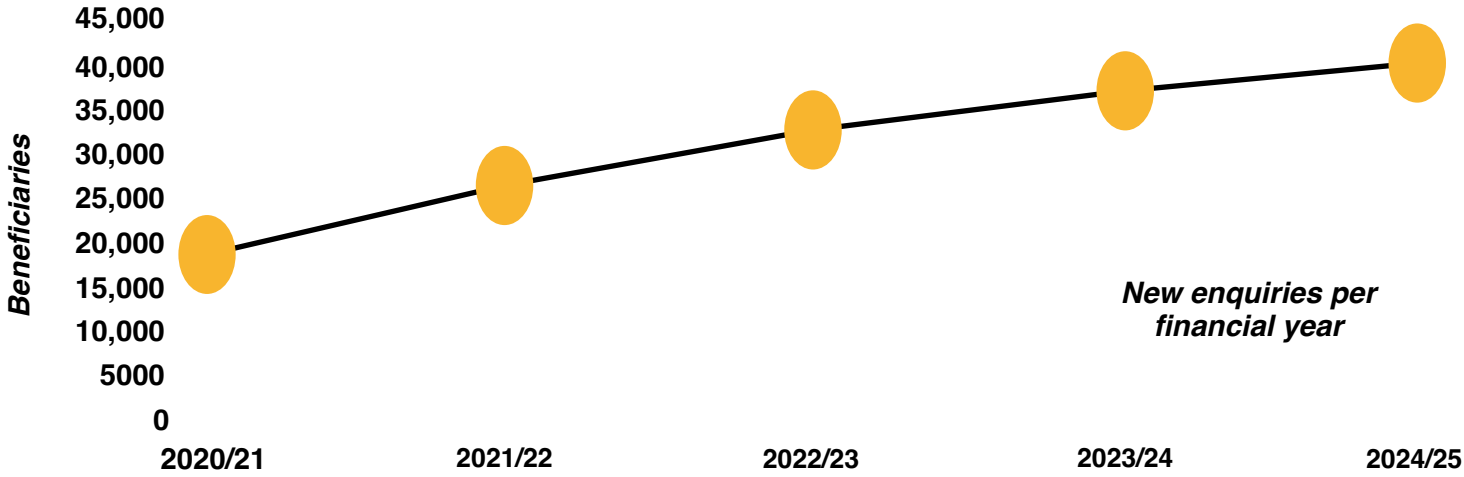
"[RMC is] a wonderful place for those in need of information and support"
- RMC Beneficiary



40,849

New enquiries opened

This represents a **120% increase** from 2020, demonstrating the growing demand for our services. To account for this our capacity has increased, in 2020 we had 56 staff members, in 2025 we now have 110. Alongside this the cases we assist with have become increasingly complex due to ongoing legal and political changes, demanding greater staff time and expertise.



Immigration support

5,290

regulated immigration applications submitted- ensuring our beneficiaries have access to quality, free, legal advice

345

applications for children to become British Citizens

the final step in their journey to full belonging and integration.

233

applications for survivors of domestic violence to achieve indefinite leave to remain

and access to mainstream services in their own right. **268 applications for survivors of domestic abuse** to access emergency public funds, enabling their independence and freedom.

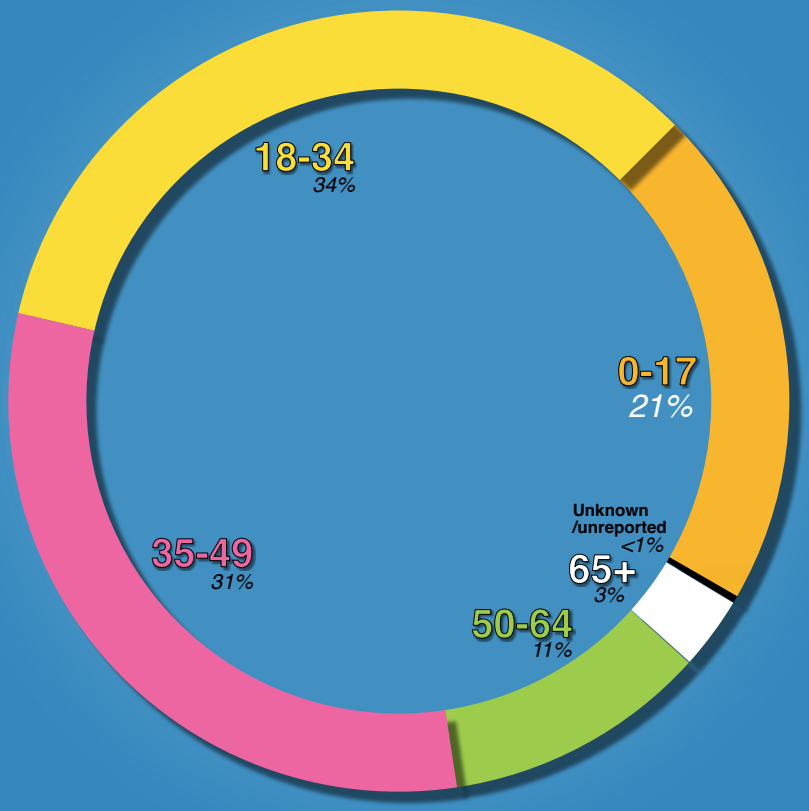
134

sponsors assisted to make applications for family reunion

helping to reunite families torn apart by conflict and persecution, and restoring stability to their lives.

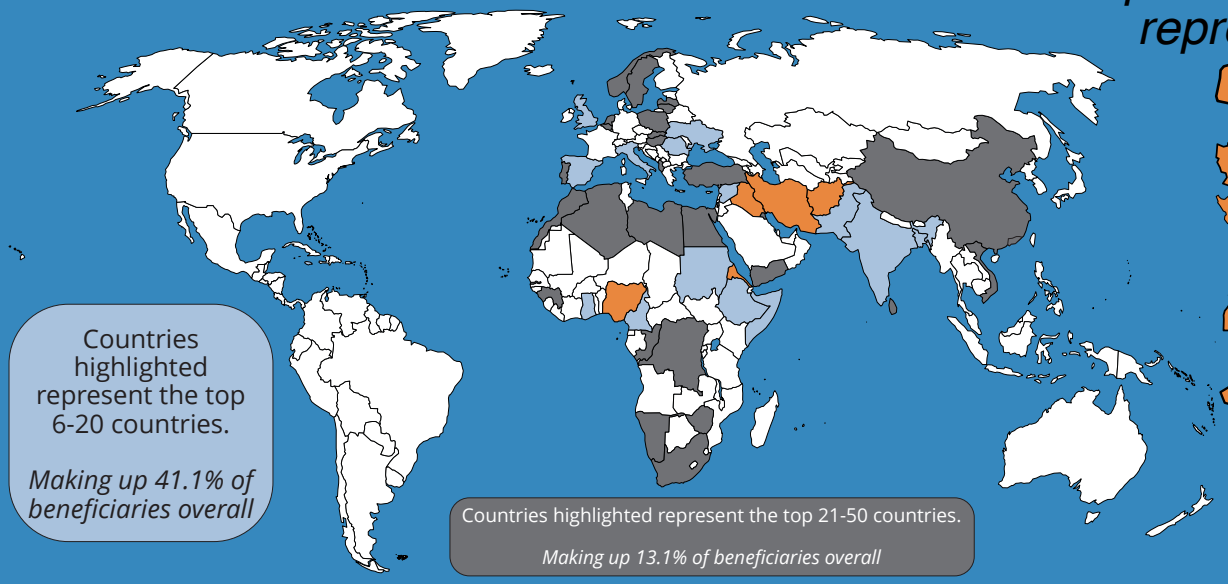
Beneficiary Ages

We helped a wide range of household types from unaccompanied minors to large families and single adults. Our interventions spanned all age groups, with **21% of beneficiaries under 18**, supporting thousands of children to thrive in the UK.



Nationalities supported

Our beneficiaries come from a wide variety of backgrounds, representing **163 nationalities**



Top 5 nationalities represented

Eritrea
Afghanistan
Iran
Nigeria
Iraq

Making up more than 40% of our beneficiaries overall

Our feedback

We do our best to listen and learn from those that visit our services and we are always looking to improve. As part of this, we ask our beneficiaries for their feedback on our service.

95% of individuals have a better understanding of their enquiry after the advice and support received from RMC

94% of individuals feel their enquiry was resolved or a plan was made to resolve the enquiry as a result of the help from RMC

90% of individuals reported an improvement in their wellbeing and quality of life as a result of interventions from RMC

83% of individuals stated they were very likely to recommend RMC to their friends and family, scoring us a 9/10 out of 10.

Data based on survey responses

25th Anniversary

In December 2024, the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) marked its 25th year with a celebration event. Having started in 1999, the organisation has been supporting new arrivals for 25 years. What started as a small team of volunteers has now grown to a workforce of over 100 providing assistance across the West Midlands, with the help of a growing and dedicated volunteer base.

Over the years, RMC has grown and developed while still keeping the core values that were in place on day 1. To be able to assist hundreds of people per week across our centres it's been important to learn and grow.

Some of our key learnings have been:

- **Building the foundations of a strong organisation** - Building departments and support teams alongside our core advice team enabled us to run as an organisation still delivering the vital services that we started with.
- **Working together** - In the charity sector, uncertainty can be a big issue. However, collaboration can lead to so many opportunities, from shared bids to shared learning. We all strive to do the best for those we support and the more we work together the more we achieve.
- **Meeting the needs** - Over the years, RMC has transformed from a general advice service into a holistic provider with expertise across areas such as complex immigration, health, employment, and resettlement. Adapting to beneficiaries' evolving needs, we've expanded services to address issues like the cost of living, energy advice, and global crises. Our flexibility and commitment to upskilling have strengthened our ability to influence policy, respond to crises, and support migrants comprehensively, reflecting our agility in a changing social and political climate.





On the 4th December, RMC held a celebration event to mark the 25th anniversary. With a mixture of current and former staff, volunteers, partner organisations and supporters, we gathered at the Molineux stadium in Wolverhampton.

RMC extend a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us over the 25 years. We are incredibly grateful and would not be where we are today without you.

Looking ahead

priorities for 2025/26

While our priorities may shift in response to emerging events or crises, the following reflect our current areas of focus

Strategic priorities

The board and the Senior Leadership Team will continue to steer RMC around four core priorities:

- **Delivery:** ensuring our services remain high quality, comprehensive and accessible, supporting thousands of people each year.
- **Partnerships and influence:** strengthening collaboration locally, regionally, and nationally, and using our frontline insights to shape fairer policies and practices that affect refugees and migrants.
- **People and resources:** investing in our staff and volunteers, protecting their wellbeing, and securing the core resources needed to sustain and strengthen our services during times of change and volatility.
- **Involvement and learning:** putting the voices of the communities we serve at the centre, strengthening beneficiary involvement and improving monitoring and evaluation so feedback and lived experience shape our work and influence.

Each of our departments have their own key priorities:



Immigration

RMC are now developing a dedicated **Complex Casework Unit**, which will help people facing significant vulnerabilities, particularly those unable to access or afford legal representation and application fees. We are also deepening our commitment to policy recommendations and influencing. By harnessing the insights and data from our frontline work, we will collaborate with regional and national partners to drive systemic change. We will identify emerging trends, and feed these into policy discussions ensuring the voices and experiences of migrants and refugees across our region are heard and represented.

Employment, Training and Education

In 2025–26, expanding our ESOL provision is a key priority. We also plan to grow support for those who struggle with literacy, ensuring they can access opportunities. Improving digital skills is another focus. We will expand our digital skills for life classes, helping people confidently use devices like phones and tablets to access services and information online.

Resettlement

RMC will continue delivering Homes for Ukraine in Birmingham and Walsall, with Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) activity expected to grow and more arrivals anticipated through Afghan resettlement schemes. From 1st June 2025, we launched a new service within the West locality of Walsall, supporting vulnerable families through a mentoring and advocacy programme. This initiative is being developed in partnership with Walsall Children's Services and other third-sector organisations.

Health and Wellbeing

With new team members, we're set to strengthen and grow our health work in the year ahead. We'll deliver health literacy initiatives, wellbeing groups, and awareness sessions across RMC sites, aiming to reduce inequalities and support integration. Our day-to-day health-related casework will continue to underpin this work. In Wolverhampton, the vital work of our Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) will not only continue but grow, offering dedicated one-to-one mental health support and launching wellbeing groups with the help of one of RMC's incredible volunteers.

Front-line: Housing, Financial Independence and Crisis support

Over the next year, we'll continue our core work while responding to growing needs around housing stability, income, and digital inclusion. Given anticipated changes to asylum accommodation arrangements, there will be increased demand for suitable long-term housing solutions to prevent homelessness. We will prioritise helping our beneficiaries to access all available funding and grants, ensuring they are supported amid rising living costs. Educating beneficiaries on ways to save energy costs will also play a key role in easing financial pressures during these challenging times.

Volunteers

In the year ahead, RMC aim to build on the strength and dedication of our volunteers. We are committed to supporting their growth through expanded training opportunities. We also plan to keep volunteer roles diverse and flexible, ensuring they remain rewarding and accessible to a wide range of people.

Standing together

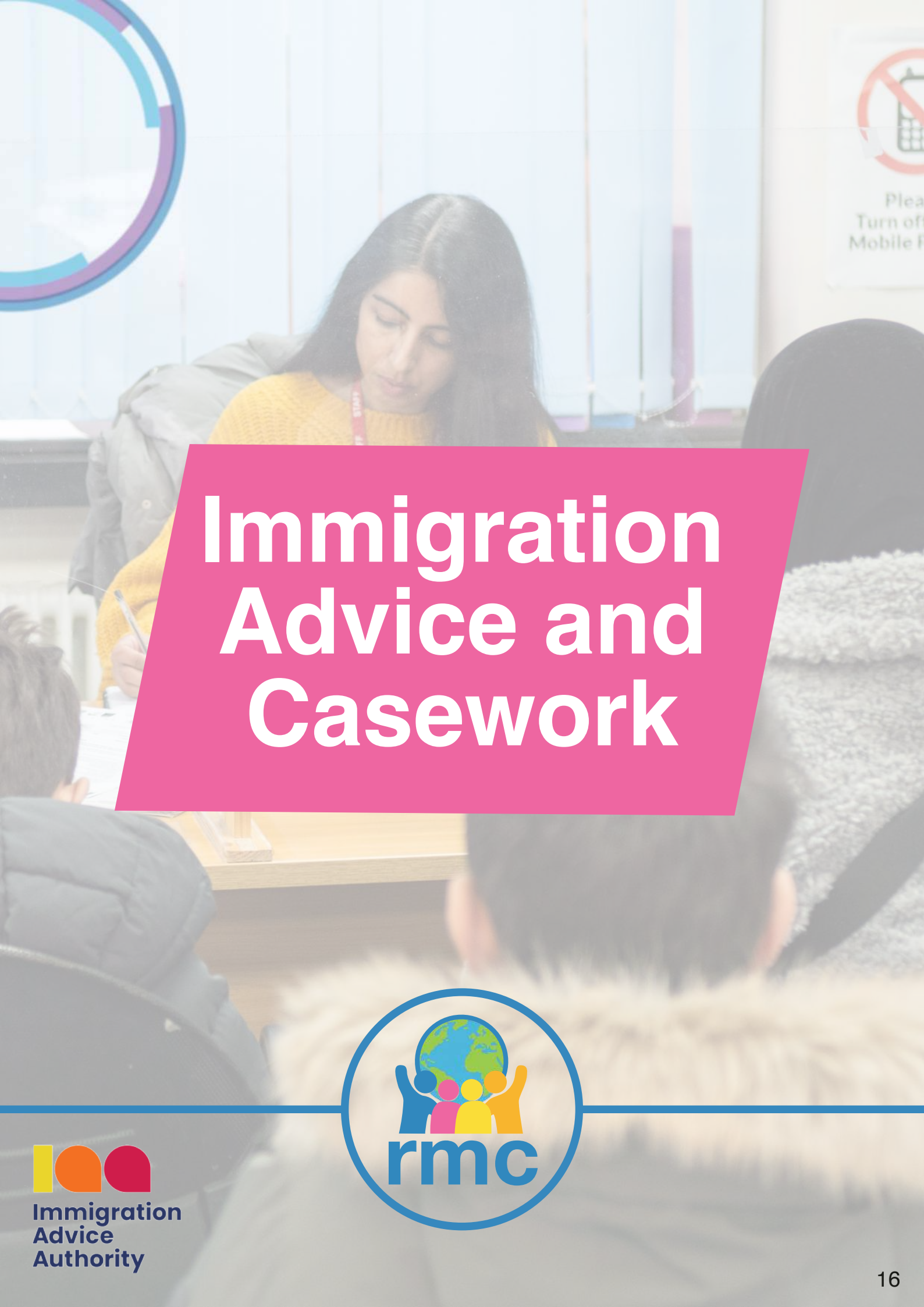
RMC is embedded into the community. Our work and our future plans are possible because of the amazing people that support us.

Be it with time, financial donations, awareness raising or partnership working, all your support makes what we do a reality.

We'd love to hear from you.

Explore the options





Immigration Advice and Casework

rmc

Immigration Advice Authority

Introduction

In 2024-25, the Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) Immigration Department continued to grow its capacity, strengthen regional partnerships, and influence policy change. RMC have 35 immigration advisors across three Immigration Advice Authority (IAA) levels, making us one of the largest providers of free immigration provision in the UK. RMC provide regulated advice and casework on issues including extension of leave to remain, the removal of the No Recourse to Public Funds (NPRF) condition, leave to remain for survivors of Domestic Abuse and Citizenship.

This year the department expanded its complex casework and training provision while leading high-impact, multi-agency projects across the West Midlands and nationally. RMC continued to deliver a vast amount of immigration casework, supporting with over 15,000 new immigration enquiries. This includes our complex casework: we submitted 38 new appeals and represented 19 cases before the First Tier Tribunal. 55% of the cases we represented were successful.

Strategic goals

How does our immigration work meet our strategic delivery goals?

12-month goal: Free, expert, regulated immigration advice to allow **6,300** people to access justice and secure immigration status

Outcome: Between 2024/25, we:

Supported with **10,261** IAA regulated immigration enquiries

for 8,254 beneficiaries-
31% over our annual target

Opened **7,290** new IAA regulated enquiries

for 6,032 individuals

Assisted **1,245** beneficiaries

to apply for leave to remain/enter

We provided quality, tailored advice, ensuring beneficiaries fully understood their immigration cases. Given the complexity of immigration law, many cases remained open beyond six months, originating from 23/24, reflecting the depth and sustained nature of the support needed.

12 month goal: Free, expert support with citizenship applications so that **1,200** people can become British citizens

Outcome: Between 2024/25, we:

Assisted **2,285** beneficiaries with **2,961** Citizenship enquiries

with **2,016** New citizenship enquiries opened

Submitted **784** Citizenship applications (439 adult, 345 child)

Secured **96** Fee waivers for children's citizenship applications

Removing financial barriers for children and families

RMC has empowered thousands with the knowledge, support, and legal pathways to become British citizens. This work directly assists people to achieve the final step of successful integration: securing full rights, stability, and the opportunity to participate equally in society.

Training and upskilling:

Our Immigration department is highly skilled, and RMC aim to share this knowledge, upskilling both internally and externally, resulting in increased capacity of free, regulated immigration advice as well as increasing awareness of the barrier our beneficiaries face. This year we did this through:

- 100+ hours of external training and 30+ hours of internal one-to-one support
- 40 advisors from 6 organisations trained through the West Midlands Immigration Advisors Network
- Formalising the Legal Assistant placement programme and supporting 5 university students, who provided support to our senior caseworkers
- Being an active member of the Birmingham Law Society Immigration Committee - the only charity in the group.

"I am really grateful to RMC; I can't even thank them enough. Because of them I now have my settled status"
-RMC immigration advice beneficiary

96%
of individuals surveyed stated they felt clear on the next steps they needed to take to deal with their immigration situation after RMC's advice

97%
of individuals surveyed stated they trusted the advisor with the immigration advice they received.

Our regulated, free service has empowered thousands to navigate the legal system, assert their rights, and move closer to securing stable futures in the UK. We have enabled thousands of individuals to secure immigration status with support they may have been unable to afford from a solicitor.

Project Highlight

West Midlands Immigration Network: RMC continued leading the West Midlands Immigration Network, partnering with Brushstrokes, Citizens Advice Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent, and Hope Projects to strengthen free, regulated immigration advice across the region. Through training, mentoring, and collaboration, we expanded support capacity to underserved areas.

Immigration advice to resettled refugees: This year, RMC supported resettled refugees in Birmingham with vital immigration advice, particularly on settlement and citizenship applications, helping them take the final steps in their integration journey. We also delivered immigration and Life in the UK workshops to boost their confidence and understanding.

eVisas: In the first six months of our eVisa support project, RMC helped 1,509 vulnerable individuals manage their UKVI accounts and eVisas, enabling access to services and employment. Our support eased anxieties about the digital transition, helping them navigate the system confidently.

Test and Learn: RMC launched a 12-month pilot with Wolverhampton City Council to test if short-term accommodation improves engagement with immigration advice and helps resolve status, aiming to reduce destitution and support stability through Level 3 advice and NRPF support.

EU Settlement Scheme Project: In the second year of our complex EUSS project, RMC assisted over 450 vulnerable individuals, more than four times our target, helping them overcome barriers to submit late applications and secure their rights to live, work, and access services in the UK.



Emmanuel's Story

How RMC's immigration services change lives

Since first coming to the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC), Emmanuel's life has been transformed. Thanks to RMCs multi-agency support and free, regulated immigration casework, Emmanuel's homelessness was alleviated and he began his journey to stability and independence.

Emmanuel first engaged with the RMC in April 2022, after being discharged from hospital and made homeless. He had suffered a stroke leaving lasting effects on both his physical and mental health. As a failed asylum seeker who had exhausted his appeal rights, Emmanuel had no immigration status and no safe place to live, leaving him extremely vulnerable. Adult Social Care in Wolverhampton had begun supporting him at this point.

We initially arranged a joint visit with his allocated social worker, to outline possible immigration options to Emmanuel. It became clear that he was initially unsure of his own immigration history. His RMC caseworker, therefore, assisted him to request his Home Office Records.

Shortly after, Emmanuel's health deteriorated, and he was re-admitted to hospital for a prolonged period. Once he began recovering, RMC re-engaged with him to progress regularising his immigration status. Our team met regularly with Emmanuel and his social worker, visiting him at the care home where he had been placed.

Emmanuel's case was extremely complex, and his situation did not fit neatly in the immigration rules. RMC's regulated immigration caseworkers began to prepare for a complex immigration application requesting information from adult social care, healthcare professionals, his personal connections, and his social care appointed accommodation provider. In June 2023, we applied to regularise Emmanuel's immigration status in the UK.

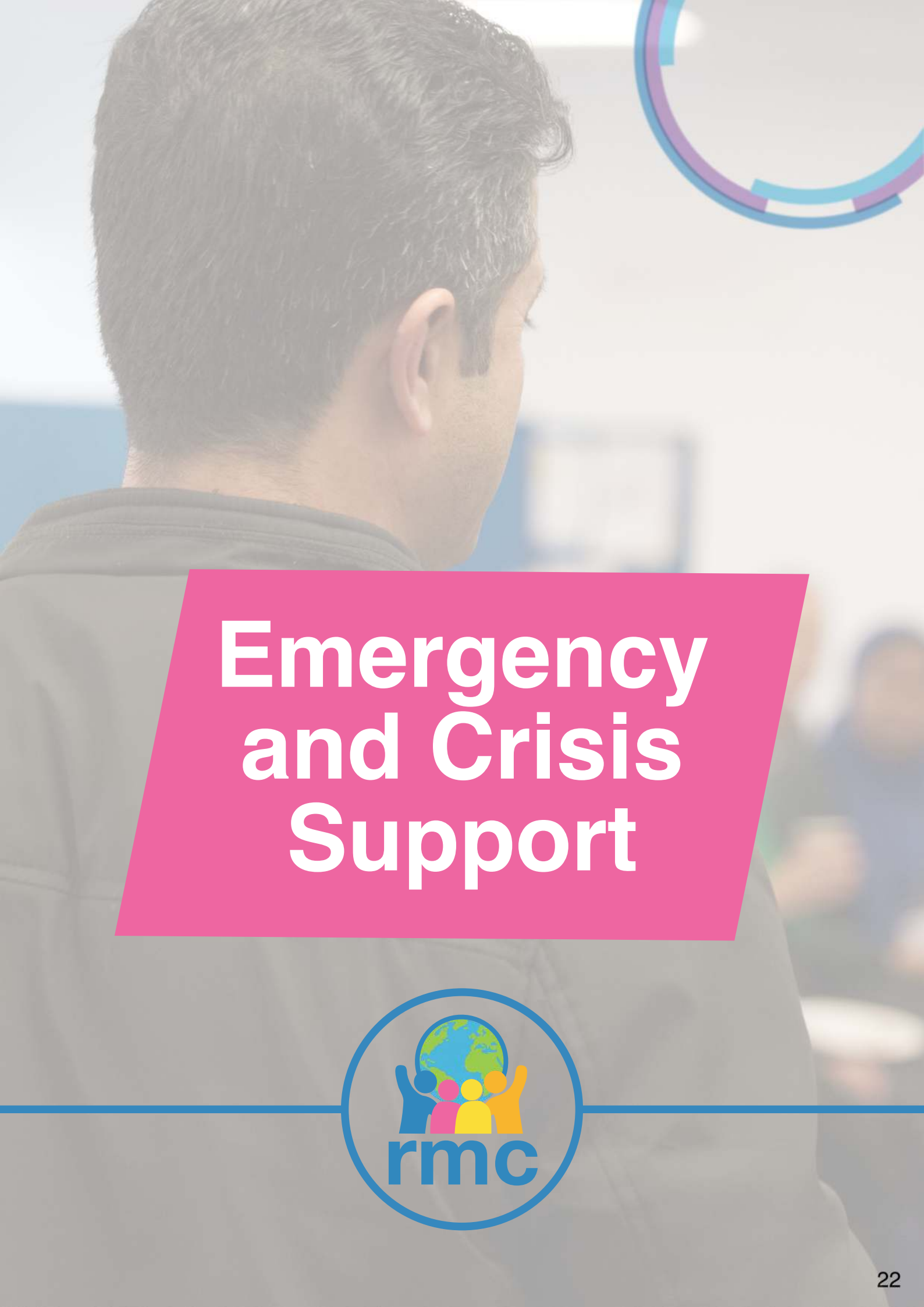
Following submission of the application, we continued to meet regularly with Emmanuel's social worker and other professionals involved in his care. We continued to request information to further support his application, providing up to date evidence of his situation to the Home Office. The application was subject to a number of further information requests from the Home Office, including notification that he had been identified as a potential victim of modern slavery and human trafficking. The response required a number of meetings with Emmanuel, who was requested to disclose, in detail, information of an extremely sensitive nature.

In February 2025 **Emmanuel** received the life-changing news that he had been granted 30 months leave to remain in the UK with access to public funds. Immediately, RMC helped him apply for welfare support and secure housing so that he could live independently. For the first time in years, he had the tools to support himself both financially and medically.

Today, **Emmanuel** continues to access RMC when needed. Most recently, we supported him to apply for a disabled person's bus pass so he can travel around the city. His case with Adult Social Care has now closed, a reflection of the progress he has made.



Emmanuel's story demonstrates the impact of persistence, partnership, and compassion, as well as the critical importance of free, regulated immigration casework in transforming lives.



Emergency and Crisis Support

Introduction

The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) understands that our beneficiaries can experience times of crisis, facing impending risk of destitution or homelessness due to circumstances out of their control. We respond with compassion and urgency, offering emergency relief, expert advice, and safeguarding support to reduce immediate risks and help individuals regain stability.

RMC work with a wide range of vulnerable groups, including survivors of domestic abuse, victims of modern slavery, and individuals experiencing homelessness.

At the heart of our safeguarding work is a dedicated manager assisted by a team of Designated Safeguarding Leads, each with specialist expertise. This team plays a vital role in protecting those most at risk, providing personalised, timely support through a proactive, multi-agency approach. RMC collaborate closely with partners across health services, social care, and the voluntary sector to identify, assess, and respond to risks of harm or abuse.

Over the past year, RMC has made critical referrals to both Children's and Adult Social Services, ensuring individuals and families receive the protection and care they need.

Strategic goals

How does our crisis support meet our strategic delivery goals?

12-month goal: Emergency support to keep **1,000** people safe and stable at times when the system makes them vulnerable to exploitation, homelessness or abuse

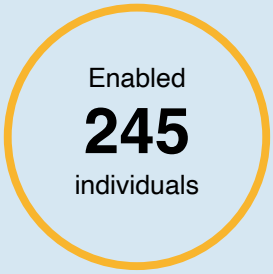
Outcome: Between 2024/25, we:



to submit applications to access essential public funding after fleeing their abuser



to access food vouchers, ensuring they can meet their daily living needs.



access to emergency funding including the Household Support Fund



with essential safeguarding support, dealt with by our trained Designated Safeguarding Leads to protect the wellbeing of our beneficiaries.

Plus

- Submitted **23** applications for a Change of Conditions to remove the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition from individuals' leave to remain, preventing them becoming destitute.
- Assisted hundreds of individuals that presented as homeless or at impending risk of homelessness to access temporary housing.

Our emergency support provides both immediate safety and longer-term stability for people at risk. Our highly trained staff deliver appropriate interventions to mitigate urgent risks, providing a lifeline for many of our beneficiaries. This support helps to stabilise people's situations and gently eases the strain on other local services.

Project Highlight:

Birmingham NRPF Women's Support Network: As part of the Smallwood Trust funded project, RMC help female survivors of domestic violence, many with NRPF and facing homelessness. We have done this through coordinated multi-agency intervention with partners including Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid, British Red Cross, Central England Law Centre, Baobab, and Roshni. We provide urgent immigration advice, submitting Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) applications to grant benefits access and referring survivors to emergency accommodation and social services. We also assist with settlement applications or advise on alternative immigration routes. In 12 months, we helped **178 survivors live independently from their abusers.**

Targeted Crisis Support for Sanctuary Seekers: Funded by Birmingham City Council, this project supports sanctuary seekers and their dependents to integrate and settle through culturally appropriate help with employment, education, healthcare, housing, and financial independence. Offering tailored long-term services, including ESOL classes, energy advice, immigration advice, as well as emergency cost-of-living aid, it addresses complex needs often unmet elsewhere. Since starting in October 2024, to the end of March 2025, RMC have supported **140 households (400 individuals), providing proactive support to prevent destitution**. This holistic, case-managed approach has led to meaningful improvements in beneficiaries' wellbeing, making the impact both visible and rewarding.

This work has a profound impact, providing a sense of safety and hope during some of the most traumatic periods in our beneficiaries' lives.

178

Survivors helped to live independently from their abusers

Through sustained assistance, RMC empower individuals to rebuild their lives, restore their confidence, and take steps towards a more secure and independent future. The impact of our safeguarding and emergency support efforts goes beyond immediate protection; it lays the foundation for long-term well-being.

“Over the years we have worked with a number of caseworkers at RMC. All have been very helpful, some have gone above and beyond in trying to put in strong cases for our clients, and all have answered our own queries in relation to immigration. Together we have seen lots of successful cases.”

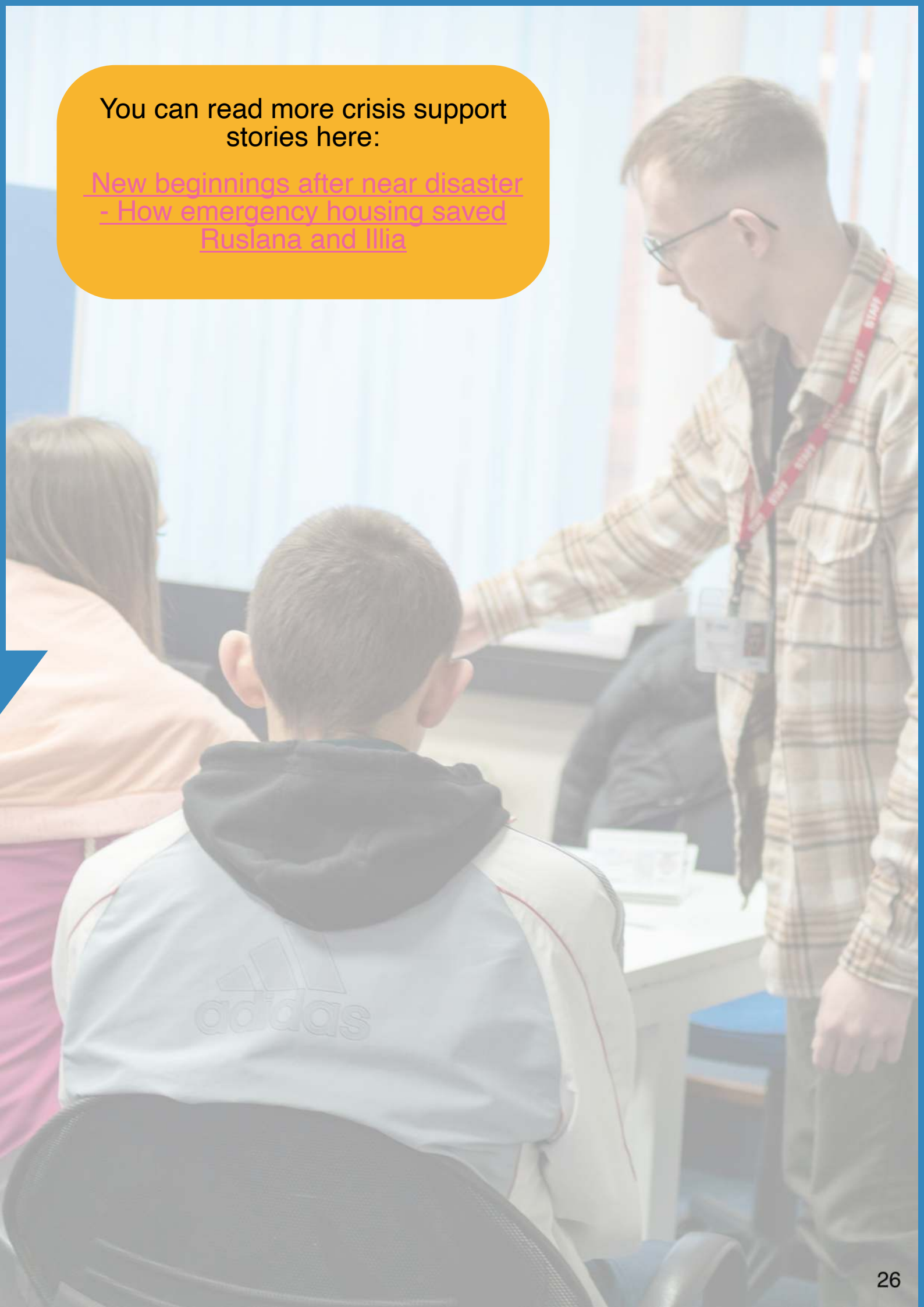
- Domestic Abuse Advice & Support Worker, Ashiana Community Project

“RMC is a valued partner of BSWA, we work effectively and proactively in the partnership supporting women who are vulnerable, subjected to domestic abuse, have NRPF and are in need of critical, emergency support.”

- Famida Khan, Service Manager, Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid

“RMC has changed my life, I was so upset when I became homeless, but RMC gave me new life in the UK.”

- RMC Emergency Support Beneficiary



You can read more crisis support stories here:

New beginnings after near disaster - How emergency housing saved Ruslana and Illia

Ola's Story

A case of a survivor of trafficking seeking safety

A young woman, trafficked into the UK as a child by people she trusted, is now on the path to safety and independence thanks to trauma-informed, multi-agency support from the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC).

Upon arrival, she was forced into a marriage where she gave birth to two children, all before reaching adulthood. Despite support from adult social services, she faced significant barriers to rebuilding her life: no identification, unclear immigration status, and deep trauma from her past.

When she was referred to RMC, she had no documents and limited understanding of her rights. Without ID, she was unable to apply for support, access essential services, or prove her residency in the UK.

RMC responded swiftly, providing whole person support tailored to her needs. Working closely with her social worker and a network of professionals, we ensured a joined-up, compassionate response that acknowledged her trauma and complex situation.

Securing Her Immigration Status

RMC supported her to apply for leave to remain, assisting to gather evidence of her long-term residence and vulnerabilities. We liaised with the relevant authorities, helped collect the necessary documentation, and kept her informed and reassured throughout the process.

Recognition as a Survivor of Trafficking

Alongside this, we provided additional information to strengthen her referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), ensuring her experiences were properly understood and that she could access the protection and services available to victims of modern slavery.

RMC maintained regular contact with the Home Office, adult services, and legal partners, advocating for her rights and ensuring her voice was heard at every stage.

As a result of this coordinated effort, she was granted status, securing her right to remain in the UK. With official identification, she has greater independence and can access the services she and her children need. Her NRM case is still under review and may lead to further recognition and long-term support.

This young woman's journey is a powerful example of how early intervention, specialist advice, and partnership working can help survivors of trafficking move forward to live happy, independent lives in safety.

Resettlement and Integration



Introduction

Over the past 12 months the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) have delivered impactful interventions to hundreds of people through 8 successful resettlement schemes including:

- Homes for Ukraine- RMC are the main commissioned provider in Birmingham and Walsall
- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy- RMC are the main commissioned provider in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Walsall
- UK Resettlement Scheme- RMC are a commissioned provider in Wolverhampton and Walsall

The provision offered varies depending on the government-designed scheme. However, every beneficiary RMC work with receives dedicated support from the moment they arrive in our local area- sometimes even being welcomed at the airport by RMC staff.

Our team builds strong relationships with each individual, helping them settle by offering guidance on the local area, showing how to use public transport, and explaining how to access emergency services. RMC then work to ensure all integration needs are met, including, but not limited to, setting up bank accounts, securing housing, enrolling children in school, and connecting people to community groups and local events.

> *"Without their help and moral support, I could not have done it. RMC employees did everything possible for me and my child's peace of mind and safety, for which I am sincerely grateful! We have already settled in the apartment, laid carpet, bought a bed, created our own cosiness and feel at home"*
>
> *- RMC Homes for Ukraine beneficiary*

Our resettlement work does not end with direct beneficiary support, we host events, we do outreach and attend regular activities across our areas of delivery.

Take action - keep up to date

Things can change regularly. Keep yourself informed and up to date with whats going on, as well as receiving key RMC updates.

What you'll get

Invites to events, training and opportunities

Key updates

Positive stories

And more lovely stuff!

Stay informed



Strategic goals

How does our resettlement work meet our strategic delivery goals?

12-month goal: Resettlement and integration support so that **430 people** and families are successfully resettled to the area

Outcome: Between 2024/25 we:

Assisted **569** individuals on Government resettlement schemes, 210 of whom arrived between April 24 and March 25 to integrate into life in the UK

Delivered on **8** Resettlement schemes across all our sites

Assisted **217** beneficiaries under the age of 18 to resettle

Plus Delivered local orientation and 'Welcome to the UK' sessions to all resettled individuals

RMC supported individuals from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, and Syria, who were forced to flee their homes due to conflict, to resettle in the UK. We helped 217 children and young people under 18 settle safely into new environments, schools, and routines, laying the foundation for a brighter future.

Over the 12-month period RMC have enabled the integration of 569 resettled individuals, 38% of whom children.

569

Individuals resettled
Over the 12 month period



40

Individuals assisted to access employment
which has promoted independence, improved wellbeing, and enabled meaningful contributions to their communities.

66

Individuals assisted to secure long-term housing
This has provided stability, reduced risk of homelessness, and laid the foundation for successful integration.

217

Under 18's supported
helping them to build lives not just for now, but for the future.

Feedback

The impact of our work is strengthened through partnership. Below is some feedback from the organisations we've worked with:

"RMC are doing really good work- hands on, visible, reliable, gentle, caring and responsive. I am able to bring more people over from a warzone because hosts are happy to rehost, they are very supportive and engaged."

- Simone Schehtman, Founder, Birmingham for Ukraine

"The commitment from all RMC staff to deliver a high-quality service and in a compassionate way has been phenomenal. The communication approach established between both our teams at all levels has created a safe and supportive environment to raise issues, share feedback and work as one team to find solutions and strive to provide an excellent service"

- Commissioning Manager- Resettlement and Migration Team, Birmingham City Council

"thank you for [your] team's rapid response and continuing support…. It is appreciated, and [I] just want to reiterate how we continue to value our excellent working relationship with RMC."

– Representative of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council Housing and Resettlement Team

Oksana's Story

A case of Ukrainian Resettlement

Since arriving in the UK, Oksana has shown remarkable resilience and determination, and with the help of the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC), she has begun to rebuild her life, gaining confidence, independence, and hope for the future.

Oksana arrived in the UK in August 2024 at the age of seventeen, alongside her mother and two younger siblings, on the Homes for Ukraine scheme to live with a host. Their arrival brought relief after escaping the instability of war-torn Ukraine, but their family remained incomplete. Oksana's father was still in Ukraine, waiting on uncertain documentation that would allow him to join them. It was a heavy emotional burden for a young person to carry.

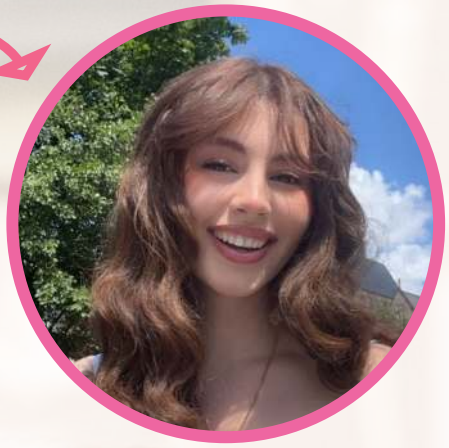
When the family arrived in the local area, their RMC allocated Family Support Worker (FSW) attended their address and completed their initial support assessment and a local orientation. The FSW stated that when they met Oksana, she was navigating a difficult balancing act: taking on the responsibilities of the eldest daughter, supporting her mother, and relying on her younger sister to interpret during important conversations. Despite this pressure, she was focused and determined. She was eager to enrol in college and start building a future for herself. The FSW helped secure her a college place ready for the September term, her first step to her future.

In her early days at college, her host kindly drove her there and helped her get to know the area. But very quickly, Oksana began travelling independently, catching two buses each day using her free Swift card. Her resilience and independence grew rapidly. By the time her father was finally able to join the family in late September, it was Oksana who showed him how to use public transport and practiced English with him, reversing the roles one might expect between parent and child.

During a visit, her father told the FSW how their home now echoes with her music in the mornings as she gets ready for the day. She developed a keen interest in the latest fashion and has made friends from all over the world at college. Most importantly, he said, she now has space in her mind to think about her future, to dream, explore, and simply be seventeen again.

While her mother awaited a college place, the FSW helped her access local ESOL classes at a nearby church. The family has since grown close to the church community, even organising a cultural gathering where they plan to cook and share traditional Ukrainian food. Oksana helped lead this initiative. The FSW stated "it has been a pleasure to witness her growing confidence and sense of belonging in such a short time."

Oksana's journey is a powerful reminder that with the right support, young people can not only rebuild their lives after displacement but also thrive. Oksana has been able to bring her full self to her communities and begin working towards her future dreams.

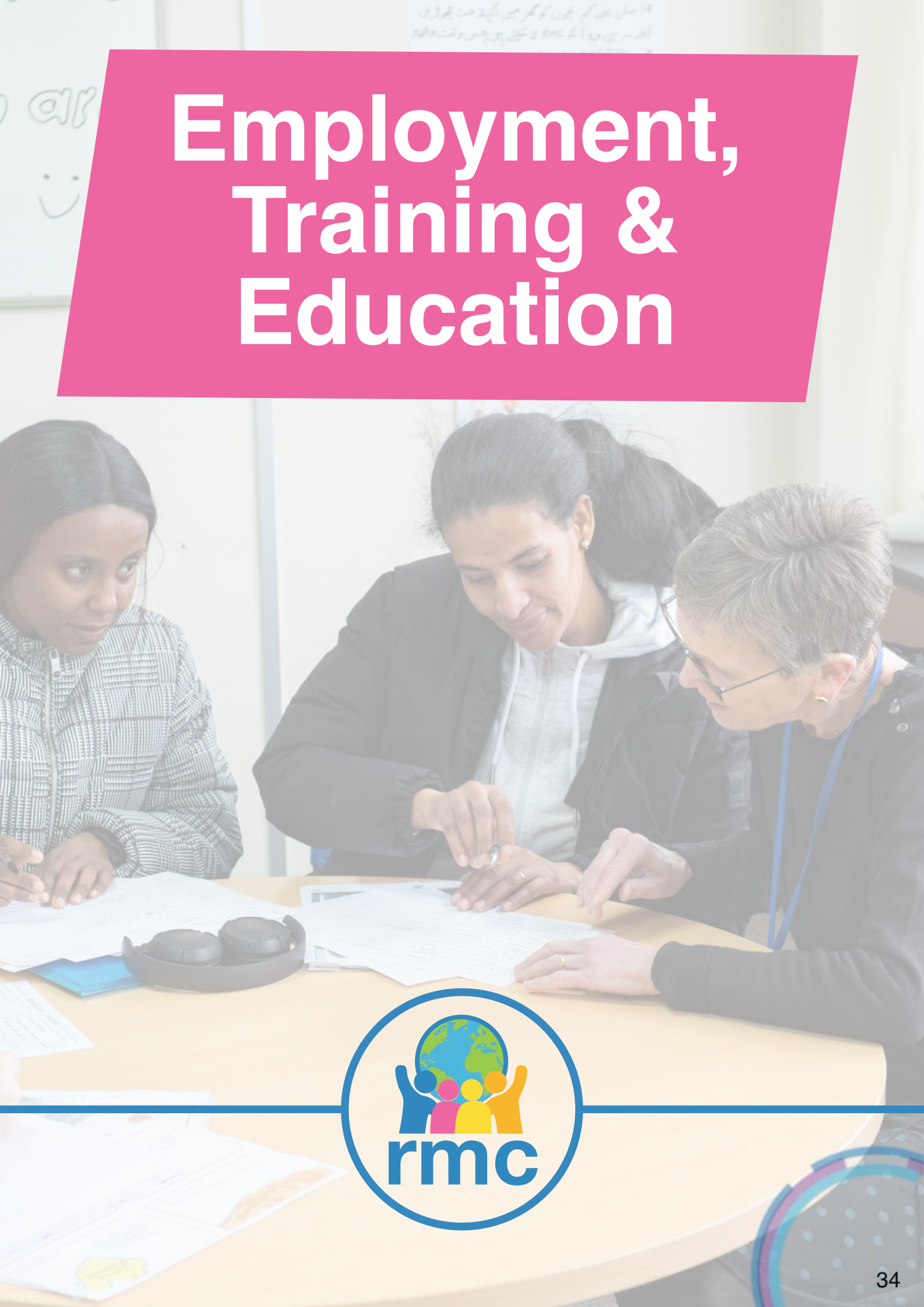


Explore more with Debestan's story: Her journey, in her words

This work helps build stronger communities by supporting inclusion, reducing isolation, and creating a sense of belonging for everyone.

You can read more about the success and impact of our Syrian resettlement scheme here: Did it work? The Syrian Resettlement Scheme

Employment, Training & Education



Introduction

The Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) employment and training work has empowered hundreds of beneficiaries across the West Midlands by improving their English, confidence, and employability through tailored support and community-based initiatives.

Our team offer in house English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes at a variety of levels, upskilling both the language and literacy capability of our beneficiaries. Our team also provide assistance aimed at improving employment opportunities including, interview preparations, job searching skills, CV writing, access to adult education and training courses, and hosting events to link individuals with potential opportunities.

Strategic goals

How does our Employment, Training & Education support meet our strategic delivery goals?

12-month goal: Employment, careers, digital literacy and language learning to equip **900** people to work, plan for their future and contribute to their local community annually

Outcome: Between 2024/25, we:

Upskilled **333** individuals

through attending internal ESOL classes, focused on employability skills

Provided **558** individuals

with employment support- including referrals to the National Careers Service and Maximus, job search skills, interview skills and CV writing support

Assisted **326** beneficiaries

to apply/ be referred for further education and training opportunities

RMC focus on improving the skills of our beneficiaries, by teaching them language and employability skills. Our advisors aim to digitally upskill during all appointments, demonstrating how to access online portals and manage online accounts including Government Gateway and the NHS app.

Highlights:

Our Employment and Training team have hosted and attended many events over the year to build links for our beneficiaries and open doors to new opportunities.

Highlights include:



Our team held quarterly job fairs in Wolverhampton to help our beneficiaries connect with potential employers and training opportunities



RMC staff attended DWP offices to share best practice with their staff on how to support our beneficiaries in tackling barriers to work



We supported our beneficiaries to volunteer at local National Trust properties. These kinds of days help build connections, improve mental health and assist integration while allowing people to give back to the local area.



Over the year, our ESOL team partnered with Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre, where students created artwork for panto season. These workshops allow for creative expression, cultural understanding, and community connection.



Project Highlights:

British National Overseas (BNO) projects: We helped over 400 BNO individuals in the past year to improve their spoken English and build knowledge about employment in the UK. This has increased their confidence, communication skills, and readiness to access work opportunities, helping them integrate more effectively into UK society.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund: We have supported over 200 people to improve their English through ESOL classes, take up volunteering to build skills, learn how to search and apply for jobs, and ultimately move into paid employment.

Know Your Neighbourhood: In Wolverhampton, RMC helped people get to know their local area through city walks and participation in community events. Many also volunteered with local projects and charities, contributing to the improvement of green spaces and nature reserves.



93%
state their coach helped them to gain new skills & understanding

Our Employment Coaches and ESOL Tutors have supported hundreds of people to improve their employment prospects. By hosting job fairs, building partnerships with key organisations, and offering volunteering and training opportunities, we have helped people overcome barriers to employment, integrate into their communities, and take positive steps towards independence and long-term success.

93% of individuals surveyed stated that their ESOL Tutor/ Employment Coach has helped them to gain new skills and understanding

76% of individuals surveyed stated they felt confident they would not need to come back to RMC about the same issue after completing their course

This support helps individuals overcome barriers to work, while contributing to more inclusive local economies where everyone has a chance to participate and thrive.

Paul's Story

A case of increased opportunities

Paul, a 50-year-old father, relocated to the UK with his teenage child in July 2021, seeking better opportunities and a fresh start. As a result of the Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) help Paul's confidence and skills were increased and he secured a job in the UK, opening new avenues for him and his child to live independently in the UK.

Paul is a Hongkonger and came to the UK on a British National Overseas (BNO) visa. Back in his home country, he worked as an administrator in local government. After arriving in Birmingham, Paul focused on settling his child into their new life. However, when he began searching for employment in 2023, he encountered significant challenges.

Despite submitting more than 30 job applications for roles such as postman, warehouse operative, and hospitality worker, Paul received no responses from employers or recruitment agencies. His limited confidence in English and lack of UK work experience became major barriers to securing employment. Eventually, he was offered a zero-hour contract as a waiter. The job provided low pay and unstable conditions. Over time, his working hours dwindled until his contract was terminated.

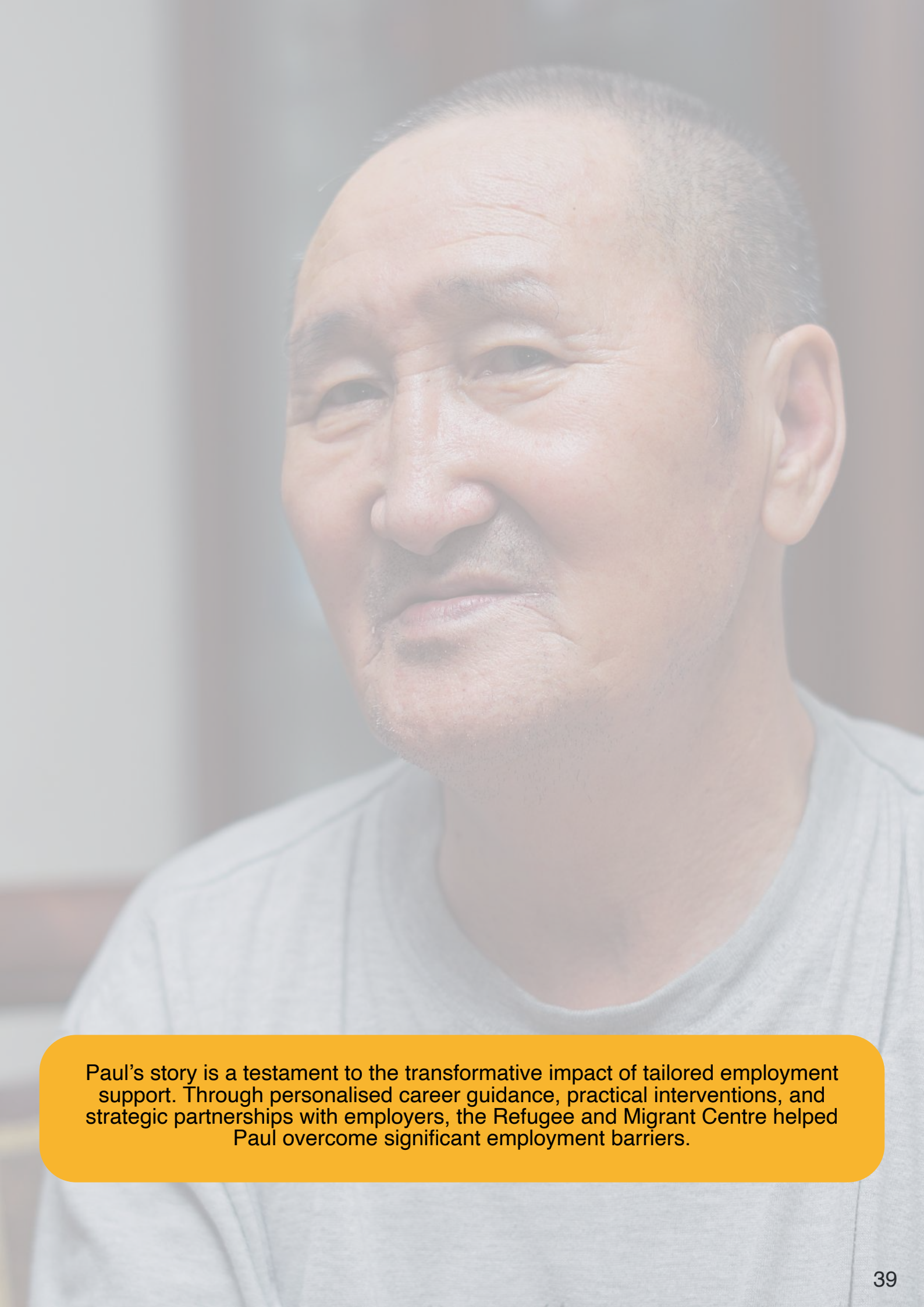
With little savings, Paul found himself in severe financial hardship, struggling to support his son. The uncertainty and pressure of this situation took a toll on his mental health. However, despite these challenges, Paul remained committed to improving his English skills and continued attending ESOL classes at RMC. Through his teacher, he learned about the dedicated Hongkonger employment support services available at the centre.

In his first meeting with an RMC employment adviser, Paul shared his work history, skills, and goals. Recognising his potential, the adviser connected him with a National Careers Service resident adviser, who helped him restructure his CV to make it more appealing to UK employers.

During a discussion with his adviser, Paul mentioned that he was considering purchasing a car but had ultimately decided against it as he was worried about spending more of his savings. The adviser encouraged him to reconsider, highlighting how having a vehicle would significantly improve his job prospects by allowing him to travel independently. With the help of a friend's connection, Paul found a suitable car at an affordable price, greatly expanding his job search opportunities.

In January, Paul attended a hospitality seminar hosted by the BNO project in partnership with Hilton Hotel, where he gained valuable insights into the industry and potential career opportunities. Shortly afterward, he participated in a Hilton recruitment seminar and successfully passed an initial screening interview. His determination and preparation led to a second interview, where he secured a job offer for 16 hours per week.

This employment opportunity was a turning point in Paul's life. Not only did he regain a stable income, but he also restored his confidence and hope. The security of employment allowed him to plan, support his child, and look forward to a brighter future in the UK.



Paul’s story is a testament to the transformative impact of tailored employment support. Through personalised career guidance, practical interventions, and strategic partnerships with employers, the Refugee and Migrant Centre helped Paul overcome significant employment barriers.



Health & Wellbeing

Introduction

Over the 12-month period, the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) have given thousands of beneficiaries the support they needed to navigate the NHS and access essential health services, positively impacting their physical and mental wellbeing.

> *"The service was top-notch, it makes me feel happy and has stabilised my mental health"*
>
> **- RMC beneficiary**

Our approach to inclusion health goes far beyond filling out forms or signposting. At its core, our work is about taking time with people to understand their needs and the barriers they face, fostering knowledge and confidence alongside giving the right support, empowering people to be active agents for their own health and live independently.

Strategic goals

How does our health & wellbeing support meet our strategic delivery goals?

12-month goal: Provide guidance on housing, health and financial independence, so that **4,000** people understand how to get the care they need, and be treated equitably by the services they use annually

Outcome: Between 2024/25, we:

Supported **1,334** individuals to register with core health services- GPs/ dentists/ opticians

Enabled **159** individuals to access mental health services

Assisted **2,461** individuals with new health related enquiries

Our health work aims to give our beneficiaries the tools and knowledge to navigate the NHS, access essential services and live healthy lives.

Highlights:

Onsite Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN): In Wolverhampton, our partnership with Black Country Healthcare NHS Trust has enabled around 40 refugees and asylum seekers to access timely mental health support through an on-site CPN. Beneficiaries received tailored care, improved their understanding of mental health, and were connected to wider community support, building resilience and self-management.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA): RMC has 2 qualified in-house MHFA trainers, who have delivered Mental Health First Aid training to 40 professionals, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries over the 12 months, as well as Mental Health awareness sessions to 27 RMC volunteers and beneficiaries. Building a network of trained individuals, supporting with community mental health.

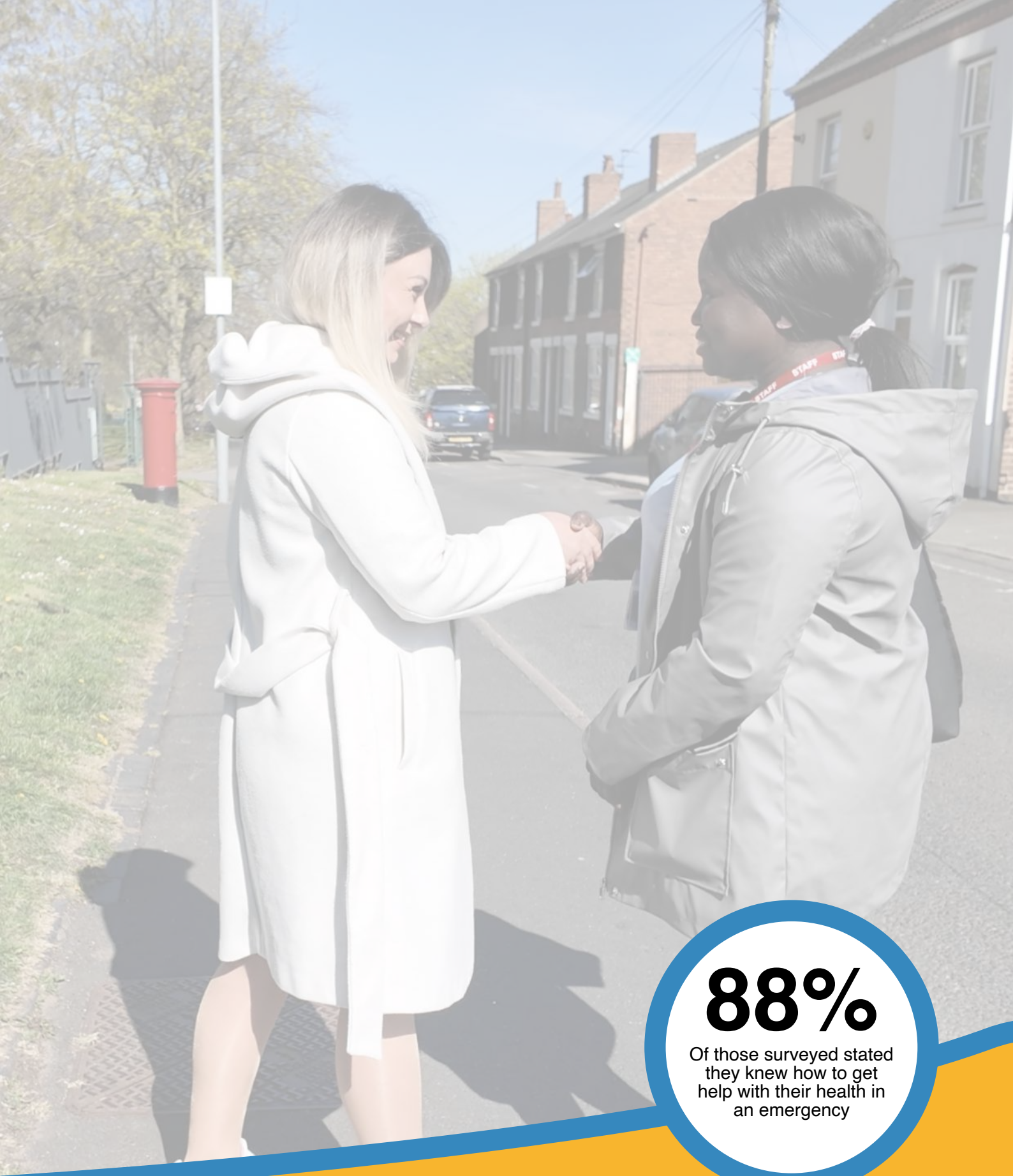
In addition to direct beneficiary support our health team has been active in attending key events to advocate for the communities we serve, building partnerships, sharing expertise, and strengthening networks. Key events attended include:

- RMC participated in community workshops around 'change NHS' to advocate for the needs of migrants and have submitted a full response to the consultation
- Our Birmingham staff attended events from the Mental Health Provider Collaborative
- Aline Boblin from Menopause Knowledge delivered informative sessions across all RMC offices, reaching both staff and women's beneficiary groups. As a result of this RMC now has a menopause champion.

Project highlights:

Improved wellbeing of resettled refugees: 46 resettled refugees received training in basic mental health awareness, while many more took part in workshops that improved health literacy, understanding of key health topics, and access to services. Wellbeing was further supported through creative sessions like woodwork and crafts (delivered by Arts in Health), exercise classes from The Eve Sisterhood, and guided access to local community activities. This work has been strengthened through our partnership with Brushstrokes Community Project. Many refugees have accessed counselling via St Martin's Counselling and Psychotherapy. As part of the same project, our school liaison officer helped over 200 children receive six group psychoeducation sessions, helping their wellbeing, emotional literacy, and school integration. We're proud of the positive impact this collaborative work continues to make.

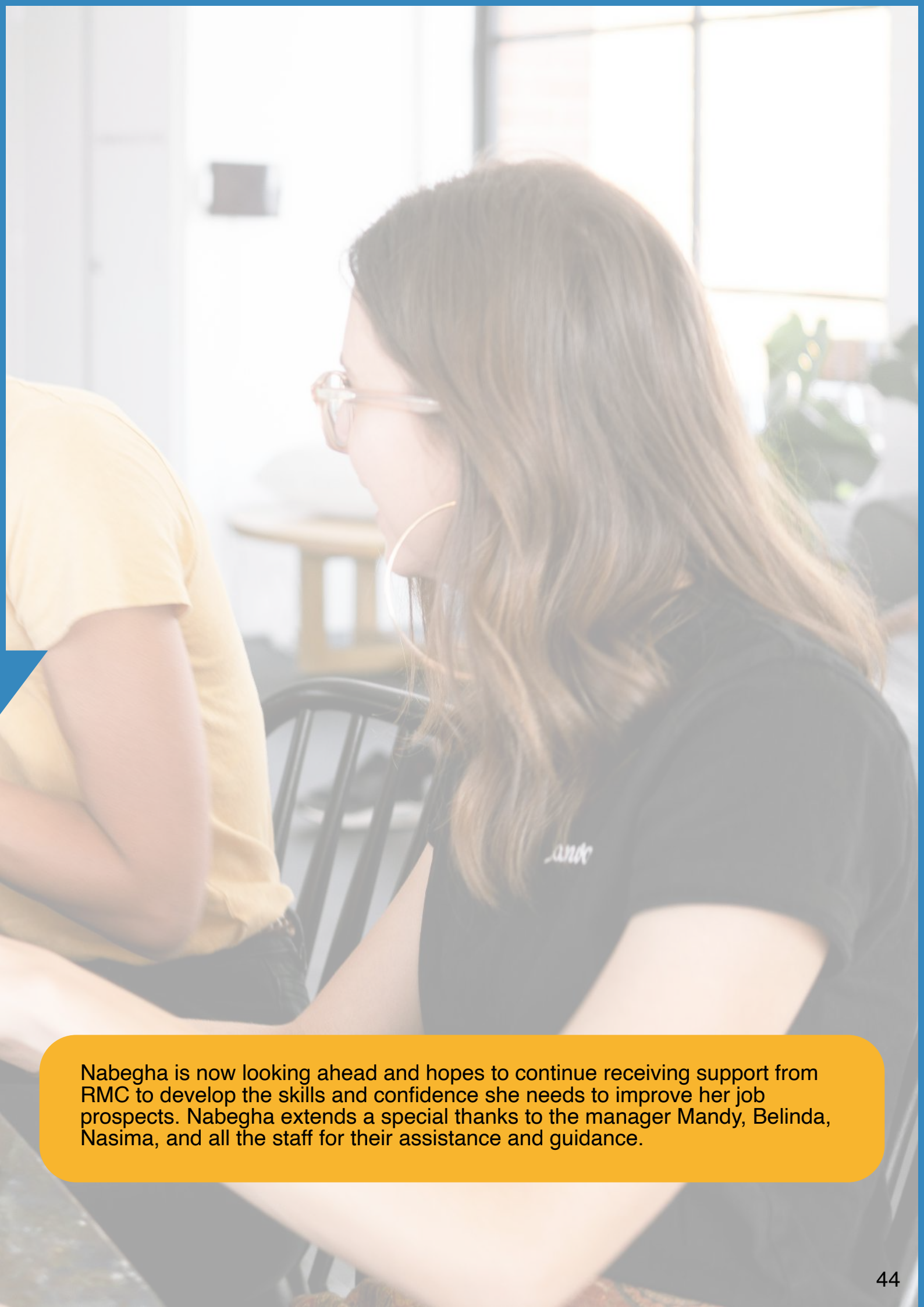
Wider Determinants of Health: Between April 2024 and March 2025, RMC supported 792 individuals with over 1,000 enquiries aimed at improving their wellbeing. Delivered in partnership with Age UK Wolverhampton, Aspiring Futures, and Good Shepherd, RMC leads this work, funded by Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. The project helps asylum seekers, newly granted refugees, and undocumented individuals meet basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, while promoting dignity and stability. By addressing wider determinants like immigration, financial stability, and housing, the project aims to improve health outcomes and reduce strain on mental and physical wellbeing.



88%

Of those surveyed stated they knew how to get help with their health in an emergency

Over the past 12 months, the health team has delivered high-quality support to vulnerable migrants, helping them access the healthcare and services they need. This work had a far-reaching impact beyond individual outcomes, through strengthening the wider community by reducing pressure on crisis services including homelessness and NHS services, as well as promoting inclusion.



Nabegha is now looking ahead and hopes to continue receiving support from RMC to develop the skills and confidence she needs to improve her job prospects. Nabegha extends a special thanks to the manager Mandy, Belinda, Nasima, and all the staff for their assistance and guidance.

Nabegha's Story

The health impact of finding a community



Nabegha was connected with a community at the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) Women's Group, which positively impacted her mental health, helping her process trauma and find inspiration to build a successful life in the UK.

Nabegha, a 49-year-old refugee from Afghanistan, arrived in Birmingham with her husband, three sons and two daughters, in 2024 after fleeing the escalating conflict in her home country. The journey was long, dangerous, and traumatic, leaving emotional scars on the entire family, especially Nabegha, who carried the weight of keeping her family safe.

Upon arriving in Birmingham, Nabegha felt a mix of relief and anxiety. While grateful for the safety and security, she struggled with the language barrier, cultural differences, and the daunting task of rebuilding their lives. The family had to navigate numerous challenges, including finding suitable housing, accessing healthcare, and enrolling the children in school, all while dealing with the emotional aftershocks of displacement.

The trauma of war and uncertainty severely affected Nabegha's mental health. She experienced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Nabegha felt isolated and disconnected from her community. She missed the familiar faces and traditions of home and felt she had no one who truly understood what she had been through. The constant worry about her family's safety, coupled with the challenges of adapting to a new environment, left her feeling overwhelmed and hopeless.

A turning point came when Nabegha connected with RMC. With RMC's support, she accessed essential services and found stability for her family. RMC helped Nabegha navigate the complexities of the UK immigration system, and connect with other refugees and asylum seekers. Most importantly, she was introduced to the RMC Women's Group, a safe, welcoming space where women with similar lived experiences come together.

RMC's health team established regular women's groups in Birmingham, funded by Birmingham City Council, to improve the wellbeing and integration of refugee women. The groups aim to build social connection, create a safe space for sharing, and promote mental health through learning and supportive practices. Activities include workshops on mental health, healthy lifestyles, and health literacy, as well as exercise sessions, arts and crafts, music and drama, walks to local places of interest, and cultural celebrations. Around 10 to 15 women attend each week, with over 70 women participating in six months.

As Nabegha became more involved in the group, she began to feel less alone. She formed friendships, rebuilt her confidence, and began to see a future for herself in Birmingham. The community she found played a crucial role in helping her process her trauma and rediscover hope.

She shared with RMC staff that before joining, she had felt deeply low and on the verge of giving up. But through connecting with women who truly understood her experiences, she found strength. Now, she feels motivated and optimistic about building a new life in the UK.

Front-line, Housing and Financial Independence



Introduction

The Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) advisors provide vital front-line support, offering long-term guidance on housing, financial independence, the cost of living, and integration. This help equips beneficiaries with the knowledge and tools to live independently, while also assisting with applications and eligibility advice to facilitate access essential services.

Strategic goals

How does our front-line support meet our strategic delivery goals?

12-month goal: Provide guidance on housing, health and financial independence, so that **4,000** people understand how to get the care they need, and be treated equitably by the services they use

Outcome: Between 2024/25, we:

Supported **824** individuals through an application/ referral for long term housing

Assisted **1,091** individuals to access a UK bank account

Enabled **2,594** individuals financial independence through eligible applications

Facilitating bank account access is the first step for our beneficiaries to achieve financial independence. Assisting individuals to maximise their income increases household stability and spending power within our local economies.

Our housing assistance aims to manage expectations, educate on eligibility and ensure our beneficiaries have access to safe, secure accommodation.

78% of individuals surveyed stated they felt more confident managing their finances after receiving RMC's support.

80% of individuals surveyed stated the support from RMC had improved their financial situation.

86% of individuals surveyed stated that RMC's advice helped them understand their housing options

81% of individuals surveyed stated that RMC's advice helped them understand their housing options

Project highlights:

Move-On project: Between April 2024 and March 2025, RMC supported 1,012 newly granted refugees and former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Birmingham and Walsall as they transitioned from asylum support to mainstream systems. Funded by Birmingham City Council and Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, these projects provided tailored help with housing and financial management and access, enabling a smoother and more stable move toward independence.

This critical period, previously just 28 days and now extended to 56 days on a trial basis, can determine whether individuals successfully integrate or fall into crisis. RMC submitted evidence highlighting how longer transition periods improve outcomes, ensuring more people access the services they need to begin rebuilding their lives.

HMRC: Between April 2024 and March 2025, RMC supported 1,033 individuals, over 200 more than our target, through our HMRC project. Designed to help newly arrived communities and those facing language or digital barriers, the project provided personalised, face-to-face support with National Insurance, Child Benefit, Tax Credits, PAYE, and wider HMRC systems.

Our team enabled beneficiaries to access the financial assistance they were entitled to, while equipping them with the digital skills to manage their own HMRC accounts independently in the future- promoting long-term financial stability and confidence.

Energy Advice Project: Funded by the Energy Saving Trust, this project has helped beneficiaries reduce energy use, lower bills, and access eligible grants, providing vital support during the cost-of-living crisis.

By January 2025, RMC had delivered tailored 1:1 energy-saving advice to 270 households and shared light-touch guidance with an additional 1,136. The project also enabled us to upskill three staff members with a Level 3 Energy Awareness qualification, embedding expertise within our team to provide long-term impact.

Find out how this project helped Arifullah here: Journey of Arifullah Safi

Take action - donate and support

RMC believes in providing wrap-around assistance wherever possible to new arrivals as well as the community.

To be able to do this, we need your support.

£10 Could provide urgent advice when most needed

£50 Could unlock English classes for a new arrival

£100 Could support someone with complex immigration challenges

Change someones life



Sanctuary Seeker hub: Funded by Birmingham City Council, the Sanctuary Seeker Hub is an innovative addition to RMC's core service, providing early, holistic integration support for sanctuary seekers across the city. It promotes smoother settlement, greater independence, and long-term integration.

The project has allowed us to trial new access routes, including a phone advice line and online webform, alongside our existing drop-in, improving accessibility for new and existing beneficiaries.

Between January and March 2025, the Hub supported **612 new beneficiaries** with urgent integration needs.

Walsall Connected: The Walsall Connected project, funded by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, tackles digital exclusion by helping individuals access key services and develop essential digital skills. RMC plays a central role, regularly ranking among the top three delivery partners for impact.

As a hub organisation, RMC provides weekly support with form submissions, appeals, and referrals, while advising on local authority services. We also collaborate closely with partners, contributing insights to improve service delivery and promote long-term independence for the communities we serve.

612
New individuals supported between Jan - March thanks to the sanctuary seeker welcome hub

The support RMC have delivered over the past 12 months demonstrates RMC's commitment to delivering holistic, person-centred provision that empowers individuals to move toward long term independence. By offering tailored advice, removing barriers to essential services, and equipping people with the tools to navigate complex systems, RMC has directly assisted thousands of individuals to secure stable housing, improve their financial wellbeing, and begin building their futures with confidence. Enabling our beneficiaries to give contribute in their local community.



Volunteering

Introduction

14,304
hours given by our incredible volunteers

Volunteers are at the heart of the Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) work. Over the past year, our volunteers and students have contributed 14,304 hours across ESOL support, frontline advice, events and admin. Their time, skills, and commitment have extended the reach of our services, helping us to support more people.

Our volunteers make a real difference. They've helped our beneficiaries feel welcomed, supported with language provisions, and provided practical help during difficult times. In turn, many volunteers tell us the experience has been personally rewarding. They have learnt new skills, gained a deeper awareness of migration issues, and a stronger connection to their communities.

The impact on RMC

The contribution of our volunteers has had a massive impact on how RMC deliver our services.

Over the past year:

132
volunteers

generously gave their time and energy to support our work

Equivalent to
£180,230
in value
(Based on real living wage)

representing a vital extension of our capacity to support people navigating life in the UK.

Average of
70
volunteers

were active each month

41
students
2,449
hours

through work experience and university placements.

Volunteers provided
46
different languages

this vital contribution helped our caseworkers communicate clearly, ensured beneficiaries understood their cases and the advice given, empowering them to make informed decisions.

40%
of RMC's current workforce

are former volunteers, highlighting the lasting impact that volunteering has on RMC.

Highlights

Events: Our Volunteer and Training Manager has attended several sector events throughout the year, including at University College Birmingham, Aston University, Firecroft College, and Newman University. These events allowed us to inform students about RMC's volunteering and work opportunities, hear their passion for engaging with charities, and bring back valuable insights that help us continually improve the way we support, train, and engage our volunteers.

In May 2024, our volunteer and training manager attended an International Day of Volunteering Event in Wolverhampton, raising awareness of RMC volunteering roles and placement opportunities.







Investing in Volunteers: Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is the UK's recognised quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. To achieve the award, an assessor reviews evidence, meets with staff, and interviews volunteers to ensure all criteria are met.

RMC was extremely proud to achieve the IiV award in August 2024, valid for three years. This recognition celebrates our volunteers, showing how much we value their contributions and our commitment to supporting their growth. It also highlights to partners and prospective volunteers the high standards we uphold in volunteer engagement.

Volunteers Week: To show our appreciation, we held celebrations at each of our offices during Volunteers' Week. While we're grateful for our volunteers every single day, we're always excited to take the opportunity to recognise and celebrate them even more.



The impact on our volunteers

Volunteering with RMC provides valuable experience and boosts confidence. Through direct beneficiary support and mentorship from experienced staff, volunteers develop new skills that enhance their employability. Many of our volunteers go on to be employees of RMC. For students, this hands-on experience not only helps them gain qualifications but also opens doors to higher-skilled roles. Many of our volunteers describe their time at RMC as a rewarding experience:

"I love it. Not only does it keep me mentally active but it also enables me to mix with younger people and learn about different cultures!"

- Jan Sochacki, RMC volunteer

"I am truly happy to be a part of such a great team. The professional and practical experience I've already gained from working on real cases is invaluable to me and will certainly be beneficial in my future career endeavours. I look forward to continuing to learn and contribute to the team."

- Olena Atamanchuk, RMC volunteer

"I volunteer with RMC as an ESOL teacher because it gives me joy to help migrants, who may start out with no English, learn and progress in mastering the language. Especially as I get to know them as individual people, it's lovely to see how motivated and committed they are to becoming more integrated in the community."

- Ann-Charlotte Holman, RMC volunteer

"Volunteering at the RMC has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me…. .Through my role as a receptionist and admin assistant, I've developed strong communication and organisational skills. I've learned how to handle sensitive situations with empathy and professionalism, manage administrative tasks efficiently, and provide a welcoming environment for those who need support.

I started volunteering because I wanted to contribute to a cause that matters, and I keep coming back because of the impact I see every day. The sense of community, the skills I've gained, and the stories of resilience I've encountered make this experience one I truly cherish"

- Alaya Begum Ali, RMC volunteer

Mirza's Story

The impact of volunteering:

Mirza is now a highly respected and skilled member of the Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) core advice team in Birmingham, prior to this he contributed many hours as a volunteer, even attending RMC events at schools and universities to tell his story.

Mirza describes his life in Pakistan, his passion for advocating for human rights and the difficulties he faced as a result of speaking out:

"I was born in a place where from early childhood I could feel the tension of ongoing conflict. This shaped my values and sparked my political drive. In my hometown, I was actively involved in politics, social work, and human rights activism. Due to my being outspoken about my views, I faced political persecution, including multiple arrests and instances of torture, more than a dozen times in total."

Instead of letting this break him, Mirza was inspired: "having witnessed human crises and the denial of basic rights like freedom of speech and expression, I deeply believe in the principles of equality and freedom for all."

Mirza describes his experience volunteering and his arrival in the UK: "I was an active member of various volunteer organisations in my area. With this background, I came to the UK on a student visa in 2022 and later sought protection. Since arriving, I have always tried to find opportunities to connect with and integrate into the community."

He felt welcomed by the community and safe from persecution "the way the local community have welcomed and supported immigrants inspires a deep sense of duty in me." This inspired Mirza to seek out way he could give back to those communities that helped him feel he belonged "I believe it is my responsibility to give back in return. Therefore, I started volunteering with British Red Cross, became a registered volunteer with the NHS, and regular Blood Donor with the NHS."

After some time, volunteering with other organisations, Mirza secured a place with RMC as a volunteer. Mirza began supporting as an advisor volunteer, seeing beneficiaries through our drop-in service. He learnt how RMC worked, the help we provided, how to process and complete documents, eligibility for applications and how to use our internal recording systems. His knowledge of UK systems was expanded. Mirza's felt he had been provided "with ample opportunity to learn and explore [and expand] my own knowledge and experience." Mirza also attended several events with RMC staff to tell his story to different audiences including school children, educating them on the difficulties faced by refugees and migrants.

Due to his skill set and performance as a volunteer Mirza was interviewed for an offered an advisor staff role. "The real-time investment and support I received from the RMC over the past two years and two months enabled me to become part of the RMC staff as an advisor." Mirza is thankful for the experience he gained volunteering at RMC and how this led to further development. Mirza looks forward to his future at RMC.

RMC are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and dedication our volunteers and student placements have given to us. Their contributions have been central to everything we have achieved this year.

Take action - volunteer

RMC has a wide variety of volunteer roles available across all our centres. Ranging from front line support to admin assistance roles, we have something for you.

Roles include:

- Advisor volunteers
- Admin volunteers
- ESOL Assistant volunteers
- Family Advocate volunteers
- Fundraising officer volunteers
- Health volunteers

And many more

Get in touch today!




Stakeholder training and engagement

Introduction

The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) is committed to continuous learning and sector development. We prioritise the training and development of our staff and volunteers to ensure they have the skills and confidence to deliver high-quality, person-centred support. RMC also believe in the power of sharing our knowledge and experience to build capacity across the wider sector.

In 2024/25, we expanded our training programme by hosting events, running targeted workshops, and attending development sessions. Topics included safeguarding, mental health, immigration policy, digital security, and inclusive service design-providing our teams and partners with the tools they need to better assist migrant communities.

RMC deliver a range of tailored training sessions for statutory services, voluntary sector organisations, universities, and community groups. Our training is informed by front-line experience, up-to-date policy knowledge, and the lived experience of our beneficiaries. It can be extremely beneficial for organisations and groups looking to deepen their understanding of issues affecting migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum.

Areas of expertise

Immigration and asylum systems

This year RMC delivered 20+ immigration trainings and awareness sessions to councils, universities, and NGOs, including events on NRPF, EUSS, asylum law, and strategic litigation.

We delivered training to over 20 representatives of City of Wolverhampton Council on the introduction of the eVisa system, what this means for beneficiaries and public services, and how to navigate the new system. Additionally, our Immigration Department Manager delivered a session on changes to the immigration rules to Lawyers at No. 5 Chambers in Birmingham

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

During Wolverhampton Safeguarding Week we delivered a training on the No Recourse to Public Funds condition, what this means and what those with the condition attached to their leave are entitled to. The session was delivered to Social Workers, Local Authority staff and school representatives.

Overcoming Barriers: Building Inclusive, Responsive Services

One of our coordinators delivered training to DWP staff around how technology and digital skills should be utilised to help individuals search for employment. Another of our staff delivered a training to HMRC's User Research Community recommending ways research can be altered to be more inclusive to our beneficiary group.

Access to healthcare and public services for vulnerable migrants

Our Health and Wellbeing Manager delivered training on Vulnerable Migrants and the Right to Health to over 100 staff across the NHS, Integrated Care Systems, and local councils. These sessions help raise awareness of the unique barriers migrants face in accessing healthcare and how addressing them benefits everyone.

Mental health awareness

RMC Mental Health First Aid trainers delivered Mental Health First Aid training to 40 professionals, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries over the 12 months, as well as Mental Health awareness sessions to 27 RMC volunteers and beneficiaries.

Feedback has been consistently excellent, with learners reporting significant improvements in both their knowledge and confidence around mental health:

“Overall, attending MHFA training can be a transformative experience that equips me with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make a positive difference in the lives of those around me, and the course was highly informative and focused on practical skills.

Engaging in conversations with my peers helped boost my confidence significantly. I also gained valuable insights into my personal and professional boundaries, realising that I need to work on them to make them stronger and more defined. I am very grateful to MHFA England and our instructors, Mandy and Tanya, for providing us with this opportunity and enriching experience”- MHFA Trainee

Integration and resettlement best practice

Our two *Learning Day* events reached over 80 stakeholders across the region, including NHS staff, and representatives of other third and public sector organisations. At each we hosted 4 workshops on issues faced by our beneficiaries. During the first session experts delivered sessions on immigration, housing, employment and health to a variety of our stakeholder’s face to face. The second session focused on the 28-day move on period (currently 56 days on a trial basis), the importance of immigration advice, migrants’ right to health and resettling in the UK. The event had an overall satisfaction rating of 4.83/5.

“An excellent event. Very informative and I learnt many things which I can share with my colleagues. Great networking opportunities.” – Event attendee

Myth-busting and values-based practice in migration work

Our team delivered a full-day training to social work students at the University of Wolverhampton, exploring common misconceptions, systemic barriers, and professional values.



Investing in people is core to our mission. In 2025/26, RMC will continue to grow our training programme, offering more cross-sector workshops, creating leadership development opportunities, and embedding learning into everything we do.

If you are interested in any of our training please get in touch at info@rmcentre.org.uk

Take action - learn more

Alongside our training, we have a range of resources available for you to increase your knowledge and understanding.

These include information on key terms, how the asylum system works and more.

Start learning



Policy, Advocacy & Research



Introduction

The Refugee and Migrant Centre's (RMC) policy and advocacy work is rooted in the experiences of our beneficiaries. By amplifying their voices, we seek to influence decision-makers and push for systemic change- ensuring that laws, policies, and systems reflect the reality of life for migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum.

Although this area is relatively new to RMC, over the past year, we've strengthened our policy and influencing work, particularly in immigration, using insights from our front-line services to highlight key trends and barriers.



"Over the past 25 years RMC has built knowledge on supporting beneficiaries with complex needs and complex cases. RMC is now collaborating with organisations, universities, and communities to build a fairer and more humane immigration system. Using our legal expertise and frontline experience, with our beneficiaries voices and stories at the forefront, we are highlighting root causes of the issues, proposing practical solutions, and driving systemic change."

- Danai Papachristopoulou, Immigration Department Manager

Immigration

RMC submitted evidence to major reviews including:

- Ministry of Justice review of legal aid- In November 2024 the MoJ announced an increase in civil legal aid fees, for the first time since 1996.
- Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) review into the financial requirements for family visas which included a collaboration with the charity Reunite Families UK. Our evidence informed the Committee's report. The results of this report are now being considered by the Government.
- Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI)'s call for evidence on the Home Office's management of fee waivers. The Chief Inspector's report included evidence provided by RMC

RMC has actively contributed to policy work through the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), especially in European law and family migration, including input on legislative changes and Home Office communications. In partnership with ILPA, RMC helped launch a West Midlands branch of the Strategic Legal Advice Committee (SLAC) and now sits on its Steering Committee, helping shape strategic litigation efforts. RMC continues to work with Central England Law Centre and Rights for Women on improving domestic violence-related immigration policies, participating in national practitioner networks. This year RMC began to work with Citizens UK to campaign for easier citizenship pathways, including engaging MPs and drafting parliamentary correspondence.

RMC's immigration department collaborated with universities on multiple research and policy projects in 2024–25. We co-published the report 'Navigating life without recourse to public funds' with Sifa Fireside and advised on the Research Better Together project. Additionally, we are collaborating with the Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS) at the University of Birmingham. RMC are also working with other charities supporting vulnerable individuals and co-authored a report on delays in lifting NRPF conditions. As the only charity on the Birmingham Law Society's Immigration Committee, we continue to influence local legal practice.

Other support areas

Expanding Access to the Healthy Start Scheme: This year, our team worked across Birmingham and Wolverhampton to improve access to the government's Healthy Start Scheme, which provides food vouchers and vitamins to pregnant women and children under four. Although many No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) families are excluded, those with British children are now eligible, but awareness remained low.

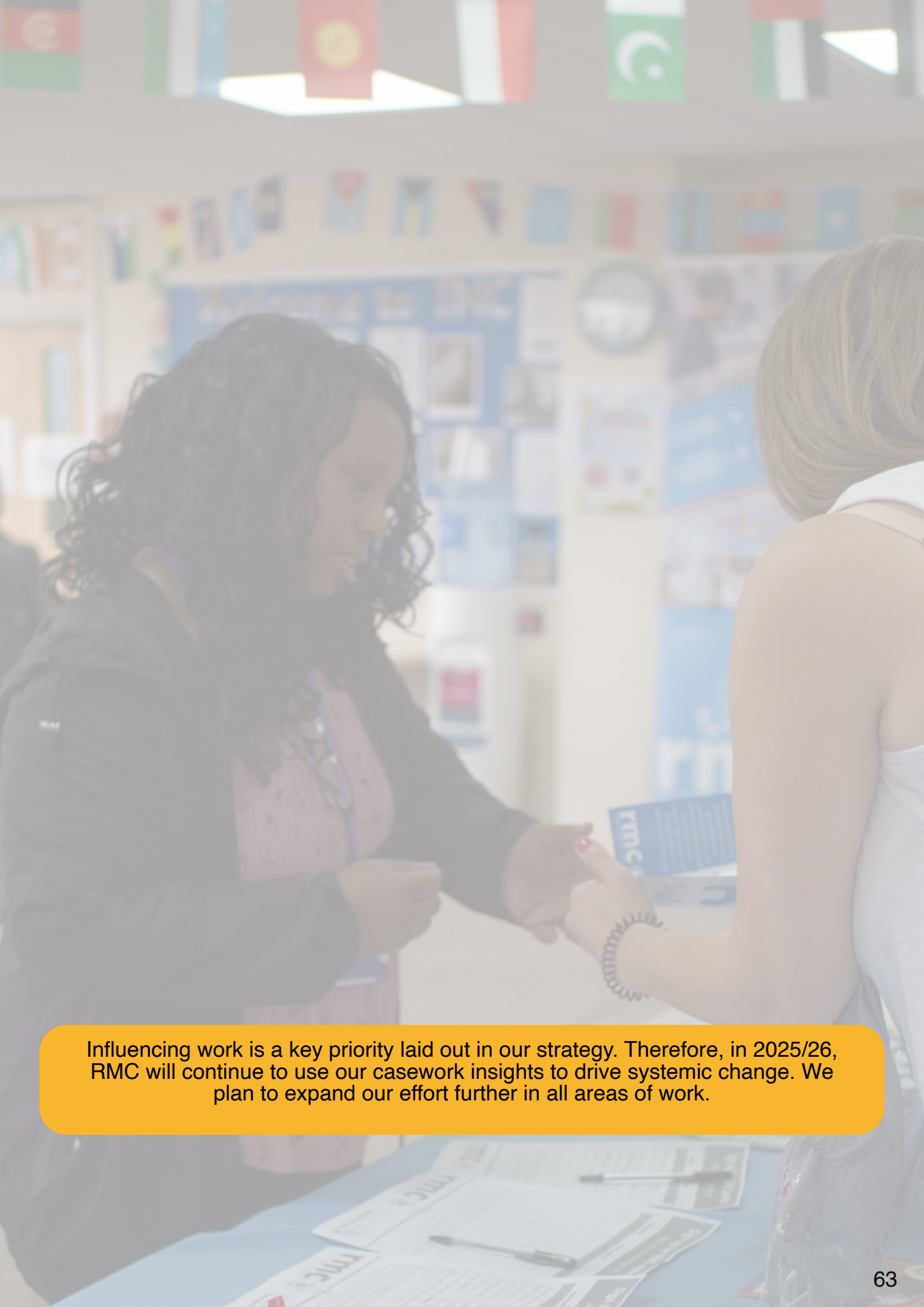
RMC responded by hosting focus groups and one-to-one sessions, ensuring families' voices were heard in a government consultation on expanding access further. RMC also submitted its own response and supported eligible beneficiaries to successfully claim, improving their children's health and financial stability. Our work led to increased applications for the scheme, made by our advisors, among NRPF families with British children, resulting in dozens of successful claims.

Increasing access to government sites: This year our team have been providing regular feedback to HMRC on the accessibility of the Government Gateway service, explaining the barrier our beneficiaries face when they do not have the correct documentation. This feedback is being considered by HMRC.

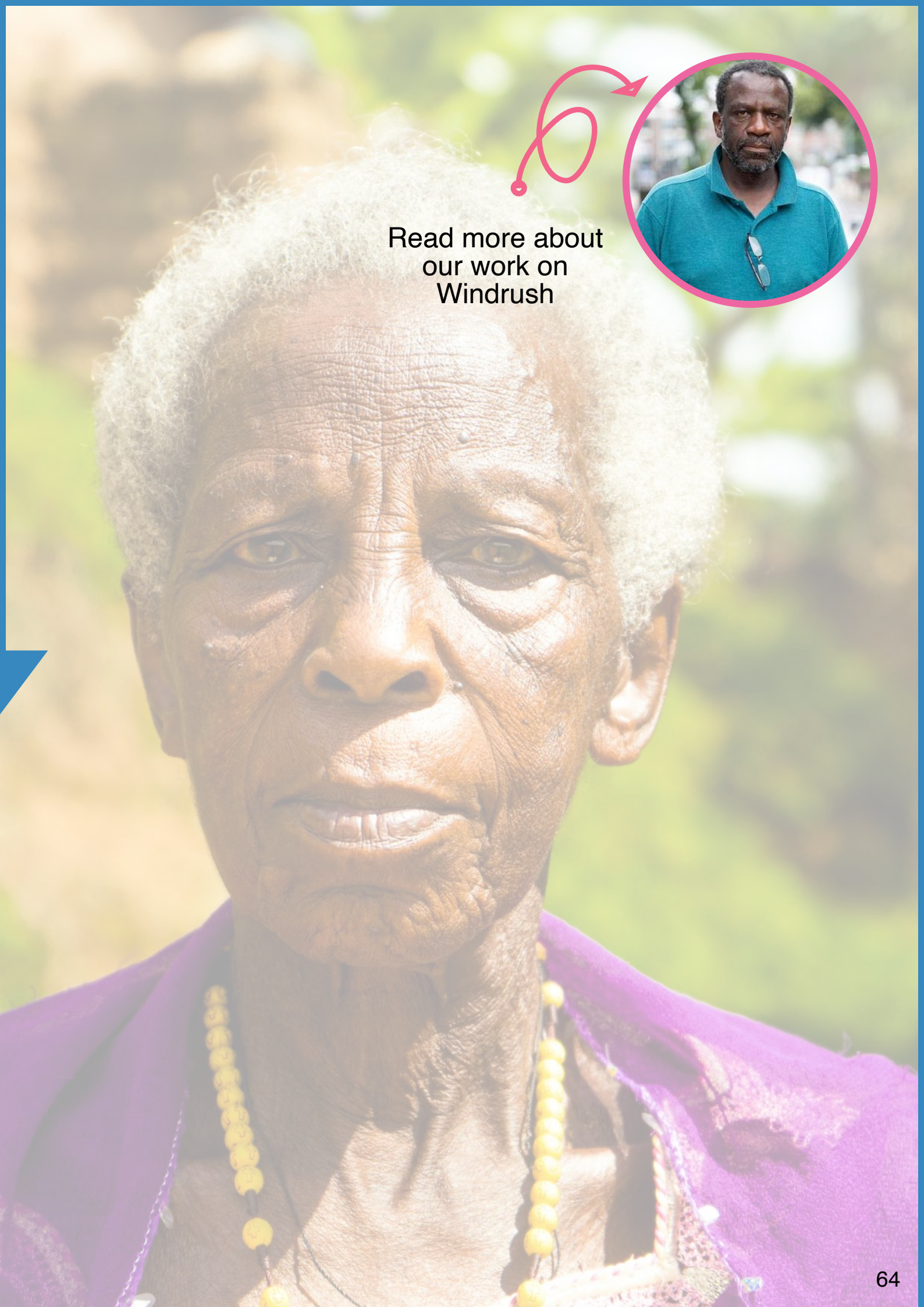
Advocating on needs of our newly arrived beneficiaries: RMC attend regular meetings with local authorities and other third sector organisations to discuss the pressing needs of this group, including housing access issues, and barriers to integration and possible solutions. Working together to put in place practical solutions to simplify our beneficiaries' journey.

Producing educational articles: Over this year RMC have been producing monthly articles on the challenges faced by our beneficiaries due to bureaucracy, structural procedures and other barriers. These articles aim to educate the public, our stakeholders and partners on the realities of life for our beneficiaries, with the aim on influencing their actions, and increasing awareness.

Our articles can be found here: Blog - Refugee and Migrant Centre.



Influencing work is a key priority laid out in our strategy. Therefore, in 2025/26, RMC will continue to use our casework insights to drive systemic change. We plan to expand our effort further in all areas of work.



Read more about our work on Windrush

Exposing the Windrush Scandal

RMC's role in highlighting systemic injustice

While RMC continue to develop this area of work, influencing policy is not new to us.

RMC played a pivotal role in exposing the Windrush Scandal by supporting those impacted years before their plight was noticed, contributing directly to national awareness.

As early as 2012, RMC began picking up cases that did not fall within our usual beneficiary groups but clearly required urgent support. Through providing immigration casework we noticed a troubling trend, with individuals who had lived in the UK for several decades being denied basic rights and protections. RMC raised these cases with local MPs, highlighting systemic failings and the human impact.

Between 2012 and 2017, the UK government steadily implemented the "hostile environment" policy and RMC observed first-hand the growing vulnerability of long-term residents who were legally entitled to remain in the UK but were unable to provide the necessary paperwork.

In 2017, under political pressure to meet deportation targets, immigration officials began to target the Windrush generation with arrests.

In the 2017-2018 period, RMC played a proactive role in bringing these injustices to light. Through multiple cases, including those of individuals who had lived in the UK for decades, we highlighted inconsistencies and failings in Home Office processes. One case in particular, that of late activist Paulette Wilson, gained national attention, prompting collaboration with journalists and MPs.

RMC reached out to journalist Amelia Gentleman, at the time with the Guardian, who would go on to win national awards for her reporting on the scandal. Amelia picked up the story after being introduced to Paulette by RMC. By sharing evidence from multiple affected individuals, RMC contributed to a tipping point in public opinion, generating wider scrutiny of government policy and practices.

It was named the "Windrush scandal" due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the people who were denied access to employment, healthcare, and other services, and in many cases, detained or deported, because they couldn't prove their right to live in the UK, were members of the Windrush generation.

This advocacy, combining frontline support, media engagement, and collaboration with elected representatives, was instrumental in exposing systemic failures. It helped shift the narrative around the Windrush generation and contributed to the wider public understanding that longstanding residents were being wrongfully denied their rights.

RMC continues to champion justice for those caught in hostile immigration policies, standing with individuals and communities whose legal rights are at risk.



Events Round-up

Introduction

Throughout the year, the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) hosted and took part in a wide range of events designed to inform, engage, and bring together our communities. These events helped us raise awareness of key issues, strengthen partnerships, celebrate cultural diversity, and ensure our beneficiaries feel connected, heard, and valued. Each event played a role in advancing our mission and deepening our impact. Below is some of our highlights:

May 2024



In May 2024, our Immigration Department Manager attended the launch event of the West Midlands branch of the Strategic Legal Advice Committee (SLAC) and now sits on its Steering Committee, where we delivered a presentation on RMC's strategic litigation work

June 2024







In June 2024 our resettlement team hosted an event at the Birmingham Rep for Refugee Week. We shared music, food and dancing in the spirit of celebration of refugees.

October 2024



In June and October, RMC ran learning events across our centres for the community. These aimed to increase knowledge and break down misinformation as well as provide a change for networking and collaboration.







November 2024



In November 2024 RMC attended the Excel church for the Black Country Healthcare NHS trust Health and Happiness Fair, to spread the word on RMC's health and wellbeing support.

December 2024



In December 2024 our ESOL team had a festive celebration with their class, encouraging a feeling of community, and creating a space for our beneficiaries to enjoy themselves.







RMC also ran our first ever sip and paint fundraising event, providing some festive fun with one of our expert artist ambassadors who led the event.

February 2025





In February 2025 our immigration team took part in the Newtown Advice Centre service with MP Shabana Mahmood. We provided immigration advice and guidance, enabling the local community access to free quality advice.



RMC and our partners brought united the community at the Old Library in Digbeth to mark three years since the war in Ukraine began. Enabling a space for people to reflect, show support, and honour those affected by the war.



RMC hosted a showcase of our beneficiaries' art at the Birmingham Museum and Art Galley as part of our Creativity Through Resilience modern art programme. The project aimed to help people to express their feelings having fled the war in Ukraine and has resulted with an inspiring exhibition. Many of the artists attended and took part in a Q&A with RMC staff.



We had the pleasure of planting trees in memory of Benjamin Zephaniah alongside his sister Millie, helping to create the Zephaniah forest with The Birmingham Tree people and the park rangers.

March 2025



In March 2025, we held our first community Iftar networking event, bringing together people from all over the City to meet, eat and get to know each other. We aimed to connect people, building understanding and a shared feeling of belonging.

Finances



Overview

The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) are deeply grateful to our funders, partners, and all those who have donated to support our work. Their generosity and belief in our mission enable us to continue delivering vital services to the communities we serve.

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who has contributed, your support makes our impact possible.

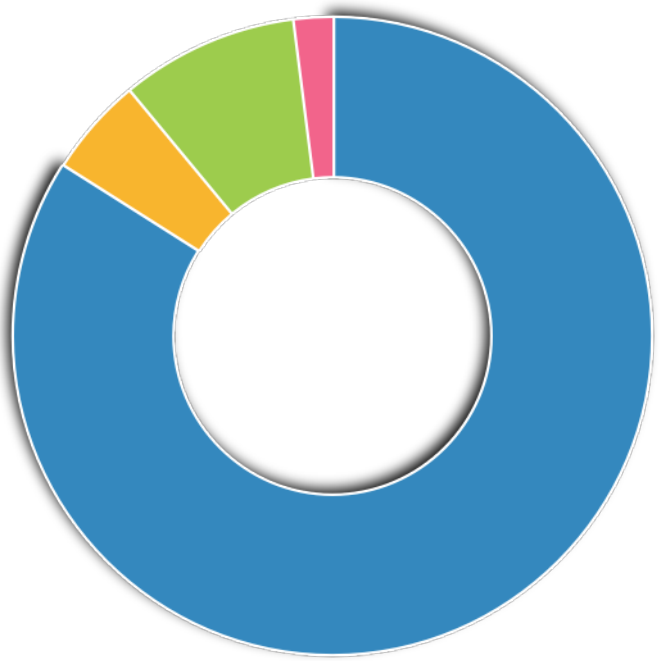
We would especially like to acknowledge our key funders, whose continued commitment has played a crucial role in helping us create meaningful, lasting change:

- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- National Lottery Community Fund
- OAK Foundation
- Justice Together Initiative
- Birmingham City Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council

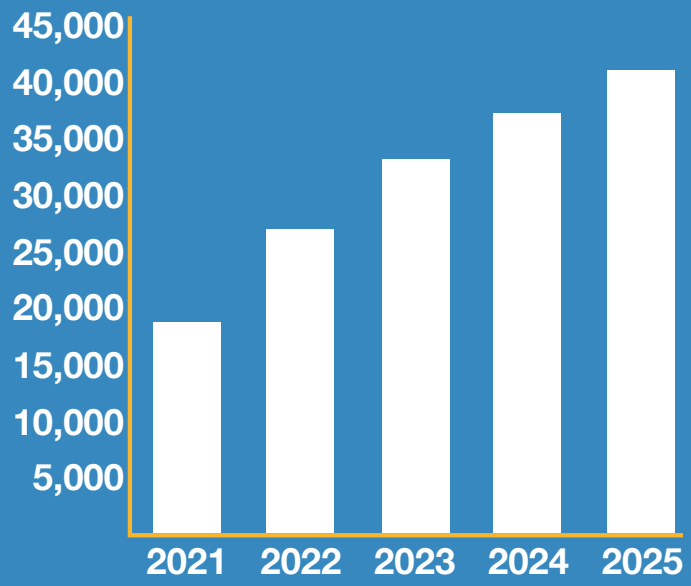
Financial breakdown

This chart shows the breakdown of our income by source. Most of our funding, 84%, comes from statutory sources, enabling us to deliver large-scale, essential services. However, contributions from trusts and foundations and other sources play a vital role in supporting innovation, community engagement, and targeted projects.

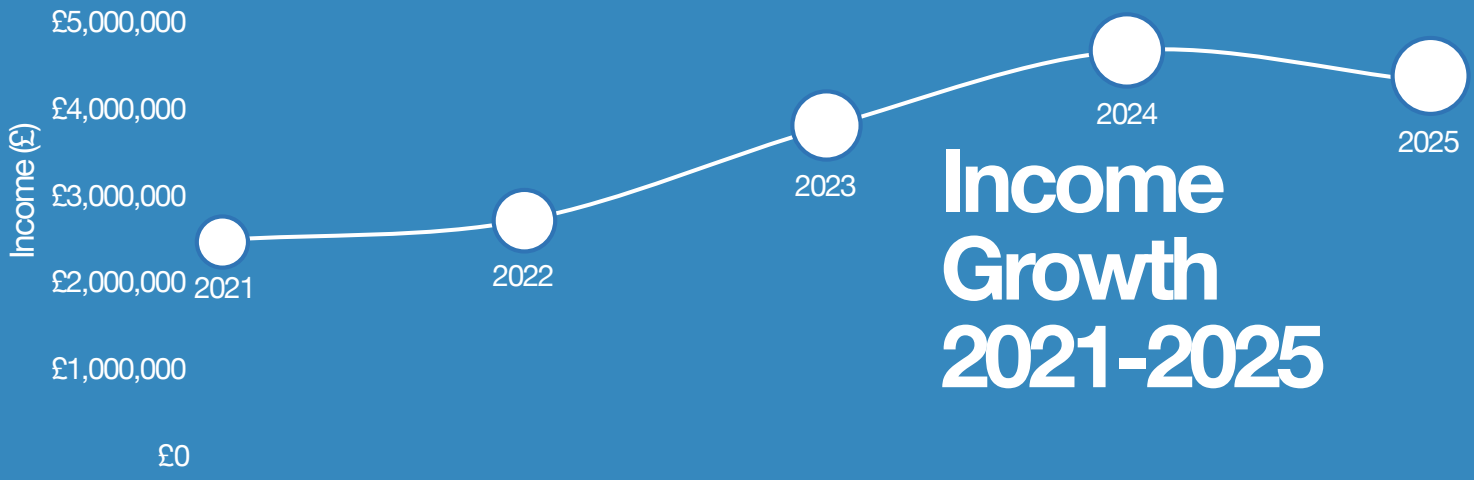
Diversifying our funding base remains a key priority to ensure long-term sustainability and flexibility in meeting emerging needs.



84% Statutory funding 5% National Lottery 9% Trusts & Foundations 2% Other funding



As the number of new enquiries, RMC receive each year has more than doubled since 2021, our income has grown in parallel to ensure we can meet this increasing need. The chart to the left highlights the steady rise in demand for our service from 2021 to 2025. The below chart illustrates our income growth over the same period. This growth is a testament to both the trust placed in us by our communities and the continued support from our funders and partners.



Income Growth 2021-2025

Partners

A key part of our work involves building strong relationships with partners to ensure our beneficiaries can access the help they need. RMC recognise that we cannot provide every service in-house, so we rely on these partnerships to help connect people with the right resources and opportunities. RMC are truly thankful for these collaborative relationships, which play a vital role in supporting our work and the individuals we serve.

The agencies we have worked with over the past 12 months include:

- Access to Business
- ACCI
- Acuity Law
- Adavu
- Age UK Wolverhampton
- Arts Therapies UK
- Ashiana Community Projects (ACP) / The Family Wellbeing Centre
- Ashley Community Housing
- Aspiring Futures
- Assumption Legacy Fund
- Aston University
- Asylum Matters
- Baobab
- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- Beacon Services
- Beeas
- Be Well Walsall
- Birch
- Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid (BSWAID)
- Birmingham Children's Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham for Ukraine
- Birmingham City University
- Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC)
- Birmingham Women and Children's NHS trust
- Black Country Integrated Care Partnership
- Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Bosnia House
- Brasshouse
- British Red Cross
- Brushstrokes
- Central England Law Centre (CELC)
- Centrala
- Central Youth Theatre
- Citizens Advice SNST
- Citizens UK
- City of Sanctuary Birmingham
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Claremont Living
- Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC)
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- DWP
- Energy Saving Trust
- Entraide
- European Welfare Association
- Fatima House
- Garden Court Chambers
- Good Shepherd
- Healthwatch Wolverhampton
- Heart of England Foundation
- HMRC
- Home Office
- Hope Projects
- Immigration Law Practitioners Association (ILPA)
- Independent Age
- Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT)
- Justice Together Initiative (JTI)
- Juststraighttalk
- LEAP
- Medecins Sans Frontieres UK
- Menopause Knowledge CIC
- Migrant Voice
- Migration Policy and Practice
- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
- Moseley For Ukraine
- National Lottery Community Fund
- National Trust
- No 5 Chambers
- No 8 Chambers
- North Birmingham for Ukraine
- Oak Foundation
- OHID (Midlands Vulnerable Migrant Health Network)
- One Walsall
- P3
- Raxzom
- Refugee Action
- Refugee Council
- Restore
- Reunite Families UK
- Rights of Women
- Roshni
- Royal Wolverhampton NHS trust, 0-19 inclusion
- Save the children
- Solihull Church
- Spring Housing
- St Martin's Counselling and Psychotherapy
- Steps to Work
- The Alan & Babette Sainsbury Charitable Trust
- The Everson Trust
- The Eve Sisterhood
- The Haven Refuge
- The Telling
- The Smallwood Trust
- University of Birmingham
- University of Wolverhampton
- Walsall Healthcare NHS trust
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- Walsall Public Health
- Warwick University
- Wave Domestic Violence
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- William A Cadbury Charitable Trust
- Wolves Community Foundation
- Wolverhampton Grammar School
- Wolverhampton Grand Theatre
- Wolverhampton Public Health
- YPEC

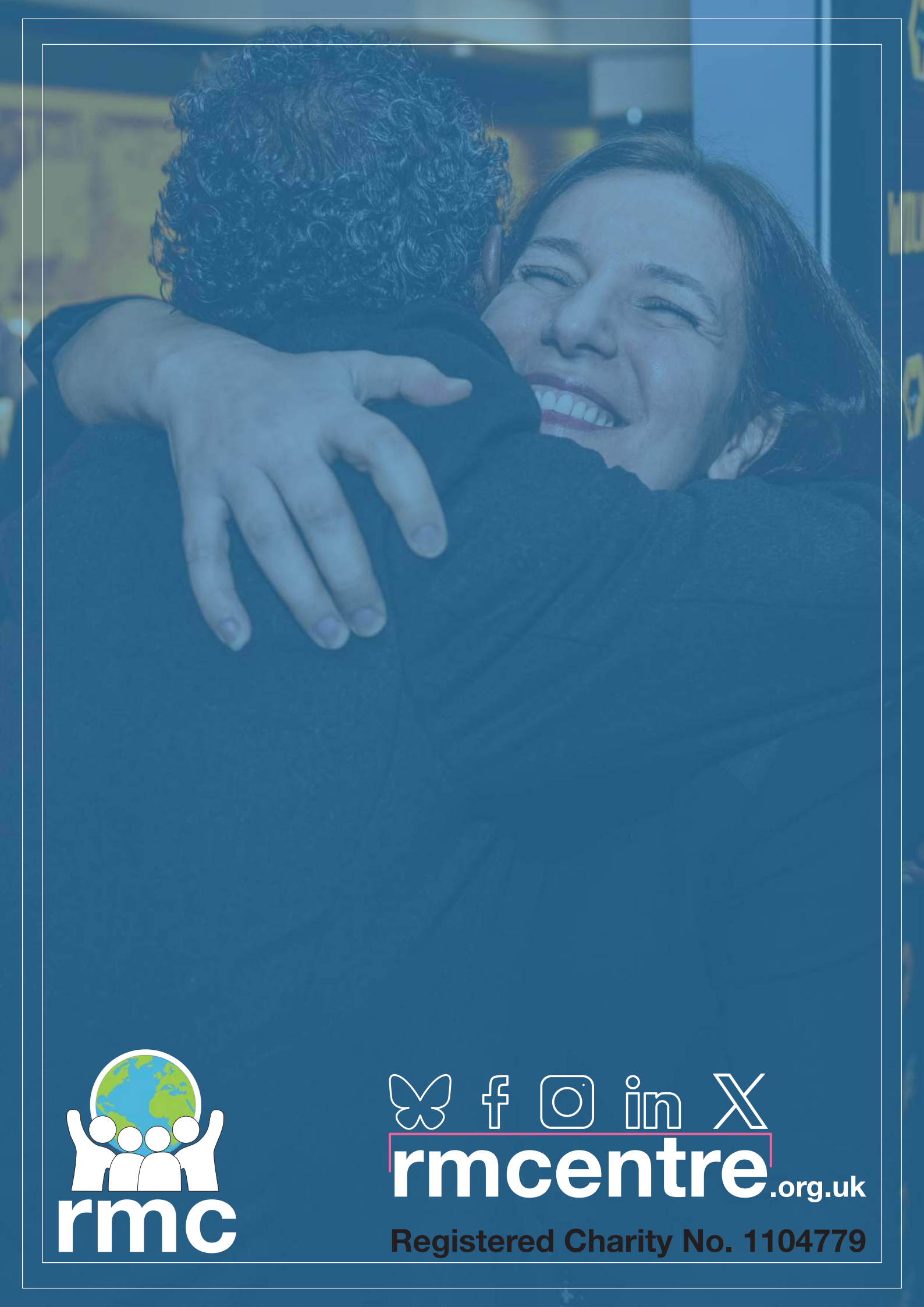
Thank You

Reflecting on the past year, we are reminded that our achievements are only possible because of the collective effort of so many. At RMC, humanity and compassion guide everything we do, and this past year has shown how powerful those values can be when shared by so many.

RMC are deeply grateful to all our staff, volunteers, ambassadors, partners, funders, and supporters. Your dedication, generosity, and collaboration make it possible for us to deliver vital services and ensure that the communities we serve receive the guidance and help they need. Your commitment helps us create real, lasting impact.

Together, we are working towards a society where newcomers feel welcome, valued, and lead dignified lives. Thank you for being part of this journey.


Thank You
thanks a bunch
Thank You
so much
THANK YOU
very much
Thank you
Thank You
THANK YOU



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