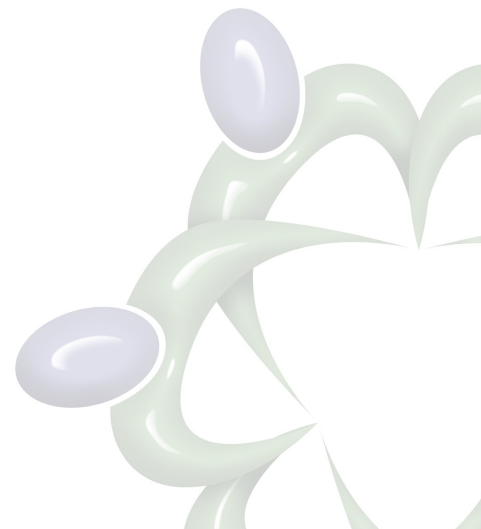




# **Rotherham Federation**

Strengthening Communities

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2021– 2026**





# SECTION 1

## ORGANISATIONAL SUMMARY

### OUR ROOTS

Rotherham Federation of Communities (RotherFed) was founded in 2006. It grew out of the 1990's tenants' movement and a strategic partnership between Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) and the Arm's Length Management Company (ALMO).

The tenant movement in Rotherham has a long and proud history with many areas developing tenant groups in the 1990's. These groups represented the needs of local social housing tenants and became the focal point of community action in many areas. Government interest in the value of the tenant voice drove the growth of local tenant compacts. A 'tenant-led' Council Housing Futures Group was set up to look at the future management of local housing stock. This established the need for a tenant-led umbrella organisation and RotherFed was born out of the strategic partnership between Rotherham Borough Council and the new ALMO.

The company was incorporated in August 2006 with an initial office in the 'blue hut' at the ALMO headquarters. It's core staff of a Development Manager, Development Officer and Admin Support Officer focused on supporting its members, 28 local Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs). Early funding came from RMBC Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Keen to ensure its independence, in 2009 RotherFed moved to a new community base in Springwell Gardens Community Centre, Eastwood.

### OUR ACTIVITIES

RotherFed now represents 70 local tenants and residents' associations (TARAs). We have become an example of excellent community development practice, supporting TARA development,



and building tenant empowerment, particularly in our poorest and most disadvantaged communities. We now deliver a wide range of services, support and development activities that help communities grow and become strong, including community engagement, training, mentoring, personal finance support, digital support, employment support and mental health support for lonely and isolated people across Rotherham.

### OUR STRUCTURE

RotherFed is proud of its democratic structure and active Board. Trustees have always been elected from member TARAs and representatives from the local communities. The company currently has 12 full time staff including 2 Project Managers.

In 2013 RotherFed decided that charitable status would offer it new opportunities and we became a registered Charity in Spring 2014. The new charity has broadened RotherFed's scope to support communities across Rotherham and surrounding areas.

## OUR FUNDING

RotherFed remains a contractor of RMBC through HRA funding but also receives grants from other sources such as Tudor Trust, National Lottery and Garfield Weston. In the year ending Jan 2021, our income was £491,007

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan outlines the aims, strategic direction, and activities of the new charity between 2021 and 2026. It focuses on how the charity will expand our services and increase our longer-term sustainability.



## THE DIFFERENCE STRONG COMMUNITIES MAKE

Local statutory bodies and regeneration organisations can only drive community change so far. They have the local knowledge, passion, creativity, sustainability and holistic perspective that are often lacking in bureaucracies and play a unique role when it comes to those things we value most - our environment, safety, welfare, health and happiness. Strong communities are at the heart of effective community development. Communities with skills, influence, networks and local connections are an essential ingredient in successful community regeneration and increasing participation in local democracy. Strong communities:

- Share aspirations, values and experience
- Have a strong sense of mutual commitments and obligations,
- Take personal and social responsibility
- Take part in local and national life and decision-making.

## COMMUNITIES NEED LEADERS

Great communities don't happen on their own. They grow on the back of inspirational community leaders who are passionate about 'righting local wrongs' and changing communities for the better. Whether individuals or community led organisations (CLOs), community leaders need knowledge, skills, and support to enable them to quickly develop their effectiveness, maximize the commitment of individual tenants and residents and effectively ensure the voices of local people are heard. Community leaders are at the heart of our communities and help make change happen. It is vital they are given the resources and support they need to be effective.



# SECTION 2

## AIMS AND VISIONS

### ROTHERFED MISSION STATEMENT

Rotherham Federation believes that Rotherham needs strong, local communities to achieve its potential. We support communities in the Rotherham Borough to grow and develop, working with them to build their sense of belonging, community pride and spirit. We work with and through grass root community groups that are committed to bringing communities together, giving all communities a voice and creating local solutions to local issues.

### VISION STATEMENT

#### OUR COMMUNITIES

Over the next five years, RotherFed's work will help build stronger, more capable communities, which can empower people to speak up and create their own solutions. New community-led groups will develop, and our communities will be happier places to live and work. RotherFed and its network will offer strategic stakeholders' effective access into communities to identify need and deliver change that works. In particular, more young, older and isolated people will become involved in community life and communities will work together to create shared solutions to Borough wide problems.

#### OUR WORK

We will enhance our reputation for work with social housing tenants by championing their needs and work with all types of geographic residents groups, and groups representing communities of interest. We will actively expand our work with minority ethnic, urban and rural communities and communities experiencing poverty and deprivation. We will support communities to work together on shared issues, particularly those that reduce disadvantage and increase social inclusion. Where

social cohesion and community engagement is weak, we will support communities to grow their voice and identity.

#### OUR CHARITY

We will continue to increase the breadth and depth of our work, and will make RotherFed a more flexible, professional and sustainable organisation, with a clear vision, and diverse sources of funding. Whilst continuing to be accountable to its membership, RotherFed's governance will be led by a skilled and committed board of trustees.





## **WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT**

### **WE KNOW OUR COMMUNITIES**

Our track record of supporting and developing community groups, Tenants and Residents Associations and other community activity means we are known and trusted by the Borough's communities, have 12 years' experience of working alongside them and understand the challenges they face.

### **WE HAVE THE SKILLS**

RotherFed's skilled staff team and board together have extensive experience of helping communities work. We excel in community development, working with and alongside local people to build community strength, facilitating ways to learn and network with one another to improve the quality of life for all.

### **WE ARE COMMUNITY OWNED**

RotherFed's roots are in communities and we are the only community focused infrastructure body in the Borough. We are community-led and owned by our members, local Tenants and Residents Associations, who set our direction and values. In delivering our work we empower, share and link members rather than building large central structures.

### **WE ARE HERE FOR ALL COMMUNITIES**

RotherFed celebrates diversity, inclusion, and creativity in everything we do. Our services are open to everyone interested in growing communities; individuals and community groups serving local geographies, communities of interest, urban and rural areas and all types of tenants and residents.

# SECTION 3

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

### NATIONAL CONTEXT

Since 2010, significant legislative and policy change has affected the wellbeing of Rotherham's local communities. Whilst some offer opportunities, the overall impact has placed communities under greater pressure, fracturing social bonds, increasing poverty and weakening community voices.

### LOCALISM

Localism is a government policy transferring power to local authorities and more broadly empowering communities to have a bigger say on issues that matter to them. Localism offers local authorities more flexibility and control to respond better to the needs of local communities in planning, local authority spending, service delivery and gives communities a right to demand to be heard in local decisions.

### HOUSING

Recent housing policies demonstrate the aspiration to grow home ownership, and austerity have led to more market driven approaches to housing development. There has been a marked reduction in new social housing and an increase in private tenancies. Within this greater local control of housing rents and funding has enabled RMBC to ameliorate some of these changes through local plans for a modest public housing building programme. There are currently around 600 new homes delivered each year and work on the borough's local plan identified the need to provide land for an additional 15,800 homes by 2030.

### WELFARE REFORM

Major welfare reform introduced since 2011 as part of austerity

measures have reduced the income of nearly all working age welfare benefit claimants in the UK, exacerbating the impact of the recession including levels of poverty, personal debt, homelessness, demand for food handouts and youth unemployment. In Rotherham welfare reform has driven increases in all markers of poverty in its most deprived localities and is underpinning the emergence of 'sink communities.'



## ECONOMY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

As with much of South Yorkshire, Rotherham developed from a small market town into a major industrial centre based on coal and steel, though most its traditional industries have now closed. After economic decline in the 80's and 90's Rotherham's economy has improved and it is developing industries in IT and light engineering which benefit from the Borough's excellent road, rail, and air links. Despite recent improvement, unemployment is still higher than the national average.

Like much of the country, Rotherham's population is ageing. Future population growth will mainly be in the oldest age groups and include those most likely to be in receipt of social care. Poverty is a major and growing problem in Rotherham and is becoming more entrenched in communities. 19.6% of the working age population are in receipt of DWP benefits. 41% of claimants have been claiming for over 5 years. Health in Rotherham has traditionally been poor, the health gap between rich and poor is significant. People living in the boroughs more affluent areas live at least 7 years longer than people from the least affluent areas.

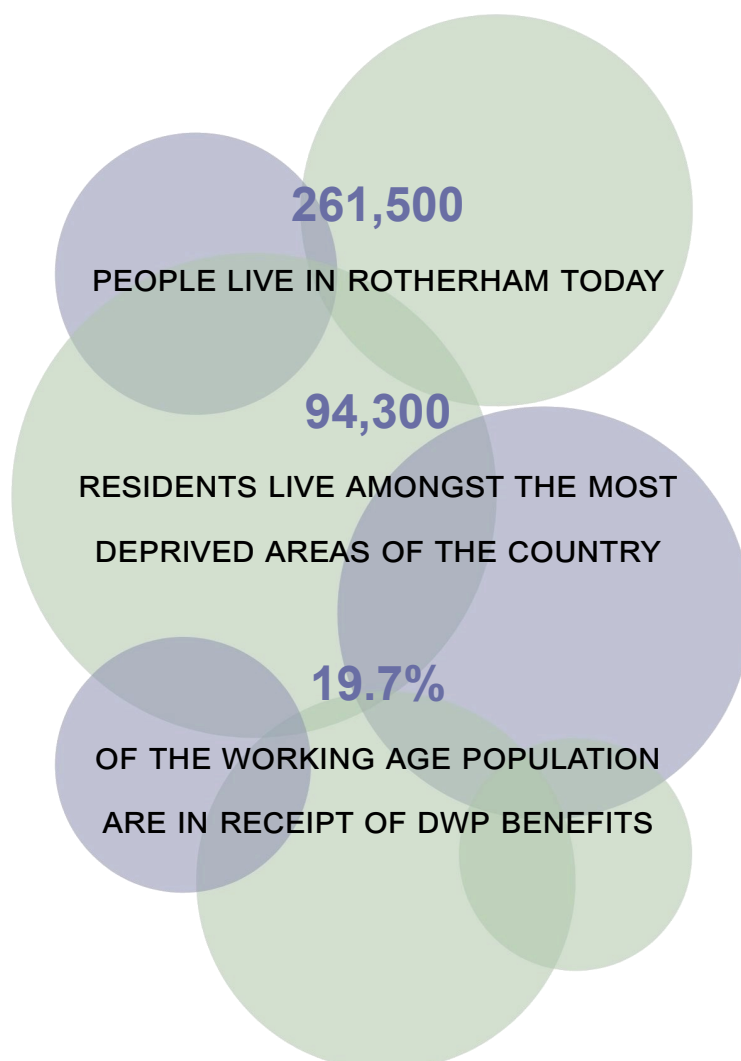


### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

There is a wide body of evidence that effective community organisations play a major role in supporting community renewal. However, localism and the Big Society have increasingly focused on delivering neighborhood renewal through volunteer led activity which lack officers support or major resource. On the ground, austerity cuts have reduced the number of community development officers and the council's ability to positively integrate communities as part of neighborhood renewal. To ameliorate this RBMC is working with community partners such as RotherFed to create and maintain community engagement.

### ROTHERHAM TODAY

The town of Rotherham is characterized by a proud industrial heritage, attractive villages and rolling countryside which make up more than half the Borough, a mix of villages, small town and urban centre's where most of its 257,600 people live. Areas in Rotherham town centre are becoming increasingly multicultural.





## HOUSING

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) is the main social landlord in the area with 20,930 tenancies and 42,446 residents. A 10-year housing strategy has been developed and a modest increase in council housing is planned for the next decade. It identifies deteriorating housing options, including poorer conditions, higher housing costs, increases in fuel poverty, overcrowding, the lack of suitable or specialist housing for the elderly, the financial impact of welfare reform and safety hazards arising from the increase in private sector properties key issues for the Borough. In delivering the strategy RMBC is committed to engage communities and individuals as part of understanding their housing need. It plans to deliver this by effectively communicating and engaging with local people. The strategy recognizes RotherFed as a key partner in empowering people to engage in this strategy.

## DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES

The indices of Multiple Deprivation rank Rotherham as the 53rd most deprived out of the 326 local authorities in England and Wales. A third of Rotherham's population (94,300 people) live in areas, which are amongst the most deprived 20% in the country. Deprivation in these areas is deeply entrenched. In the poorest areas, located near the centre of the town, deprivation has increased. These areas experience high levels of poverty, crime, ill health housing conditions and poor health and lower levels of social cohesion.

## UNDER REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

Despite RotherFed's work, some of the Borough's most deprived communities who are furthest away from decision makers lack access to an inclusive, community-led organisation who can ensure their voice is heard and can help lead the building of strong communities. In addition, many communities of interest lack a local member-led body or have member led bodies, which are too small to make the voice of members effective.

RotherFed's independent audit in 2019 states "there is scope to address additional social support needs within RotherFed's membership and further research into the unmet needs of other under-represented communities in Rotherham currently accessing no services from any third sector provider".

## RESIDENTS VOICES

The value of hearing residents' voices is increasing being recognized by service providers as a route to delivering quality.



RotherFed provides a mechanism for communities to join their voices together in local and national consultations around issues linked to housing and communities.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

### COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Communities work best when they control their own organisations. Empowered and skilled communities don't just emerge and the turnover in communities means the need for support is ongoing. In developing communities, identifying, and building community leaders is a major need. Without this community gains can be quickly lost when targeted support is withdrawn.

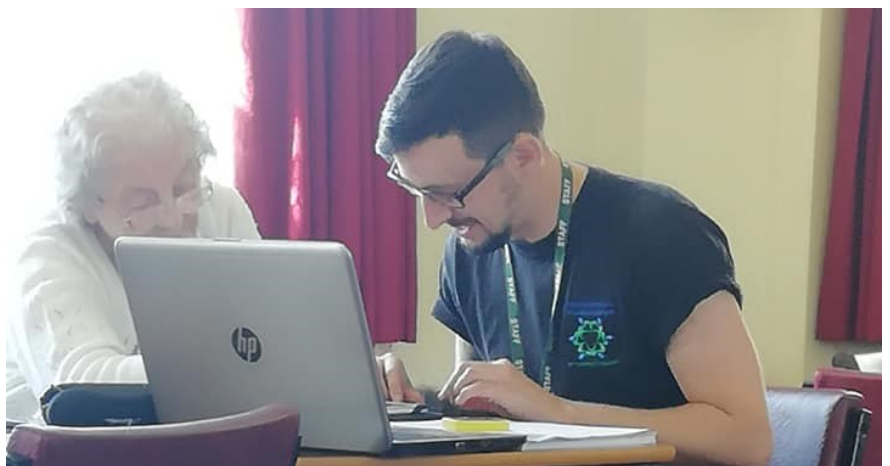
## ROTHERHAM'S COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Community growth and development in Rotherham is led by RMBC and community partners of which RotherFed is one. Within this there are targets to:

- Support all residents live healthy and active lives.
- Support those that are disengaged from the labour market to improve their skills, aspirations and work readiness.
- Develop a sustainable partnership approach to tackling community challenges at a local level with a focus on our most deprived neighbourhoods
- Develop partnership-based engagement with communities that helps to build resilient communities that support a future less dependent upon public services
- Develop a dispersed model of leadership that identifies, works with and supports community 'champions and advocates' to facilitate action and organise activities
- Develop a collaborative effort that ensures those hit hardest by the recession and sustained economic downturn are informed and supported to deal with its impact and consequences
- Ensure less older people in Rotherham suffering from loneliness and isolation.

## PRIVATE TENANCIES

Rotherham's private rented sector has doubled in the last 10 years and now provides 12,500 out of its 113,000 homes. Some private tenants are the poorest and least protected residents in the Borough. Their voices are rarely heard and there are linkages between neighborhoods with high rates of empty properties, occupier turnover and anti-social behavior (including Central Rotherham, Eastwood, Masborough, Maltby South East and Dinnington) and significant numbers of private tenancies.



## SUMMARY OF NEED

Looking forward, RotherFed will identify and promotes its services to four main groups:

- Individuals looking to engage in activity within local communities.
- Community tenants and residents' associations who play or intend to play an active role in growing and empowering local communities.
- Residents who need additional support and personal development to fulfill their potential, helping those who need it to move out of crisis situations.
- Current and potential funders who may wish to purchase services by contract or through grant donation. on behalf of users and / or residents.

## STATUTORY SECTOR

RMBC currently has a team of community/ward based coordinators. They work with council tenants, residents in all Wards with a clear focus on the most deprived communities and communities of interest. RotherFed's staff have good working relationships with these officers and are key and complementary delivery partners. Also, the team of RMBC Housing Officers link with the RotherFed staff on the ground helping to get support for local people who want to get more involved more in community activities, or making referrals for those who need additional personal support.

## VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Uniqueness of Rotherfed's activity - In 2019 an independent, qualitative audit of RotherFed's work reported immense member satisfaction with the quality and responsiveness of RotherFed services. RotherFed's activities are unique in the district as is its community led governance structure. Whilst local areas have grass roots community organisations there are no other structures that link all TARAs and community led organisations (CLOs) together across the Borough coordinate action on shared community issues or focus on building community leadership and empowerment.

Local Infrastructure bodies - The number of local infrastructure bodies has been rationalised over the past few years delivering



greater efficiencies and effectiveness. RotherFed works in close collaboration with these bodies and its work complements rather than duplicates functions. It has relationships with Voluntary Action Rotherham which offers a range of back room support functions and Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance which supports the borough's BME communities. All three bodies regularly collaborate to deliver local initiatives.

# SECTION 4

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

A range of key drivers inform RotherFed's strategic outcomes. They build on the charity's strengths, focus on the needs of Rotherham's communities and will support it to remain strong and grow whilst at the same time addressing the impact of recent political and economic change. Analysis shows we have opportunities to:

- Use RotherFed's closeness to communities, awareness of community need, ability to involve people and respond effectively and quickly to issues help grow cohesive communities in all areas of the Borough, particularly where people are most vulnerable.
- Share RotherFed's diverse range of affordable skills and support activities with communities to build their capacity and professionalism, particularly in the areas of group support, mentoring, event organisation and community engagement.
- Use RotherFed's strong links with statutory, voluntary and private sector partners allow communities to access decision makers and positively influence change.
- Strengthen RotherFed's financial sustainability by its business and commercial skills, proactively linking with the private sector and diversifying its funding portfolio
- Create wider community participation in our activities, developing opportunities for more services and volunteer co-ordination, in particular those who need personal support with mental health and money management.
- Take advantage of local authority and charitable trusts to secure grants and contracts that deliver both targeted and district wide community change activities.



## 2021—2026 STRATEGIC OUTCOMES. OUTCOMES ACHIEVED BY 2026

OUTCOME	INDICATORS
<b>1</b>  More communities in Rotherham will be more resilient and empowered	<b>A</b> Increased numbers of community led organisations (CLOs) leading on community life and engagement <b>B</b> Community activity increased through enabling groups to develop services in their communities <b>C</b> More Communities have a strong community voice and can take action to improve their lives and neighbourhoods
<b>2</b>  The hardest to reach communities will be more resilient	<b>A</b> More local people from vulnerable and deprived communities are engaged in support services and community life <b>B</b> Vulnerable/deprived communities more resilient through increased support on a range of social issues <b>C</b> Loneliness, isolation and mental health issues are addressed, and more people become integrated into community life
<b>3</b>  Community engagement and delivery will grow and be more effective	<b>A</b> Grow the capacity of community led organisations to increase community impact within their neighbourhoods <b>B</b> Staff and volunteers deliver services to support with various social needs such as money management, employment and mental health <b>C</b> Communities to get back on their feet safely in a post Covid environment
<b>4</b>  RotherFed will be a more sustainable organisation	<b>A</b> RotherFed is a more representative organisation of Rotherham communities <b>B</b> RotherFed is a financially sustainable charity

# SECTION 5

## CASE STUDIES

### EAST HERRINGTHORPE LITTER PICKERS

Natalie a local volunteer in East Herringthorpe approached RotherFed in 2019 after she grew concerned on the amount of litter thrown on the streets in her local area. We discussed potential solutions to combat the waste on the streets with Natalie who was passionate about 'doing something to help her own community'. Natalie then attended our Community Organiser training in order to equip her with the skills and knowledge when working within the community. Natalie was excited with the idea to lead her first of many community clean-up in the area, planning dates, creating posters, promoting the clean up through social media, and contacting partners who got involved, along with Michael another volunteer and ex-resident. After 2 hours, over 30 bags of rubbish had been collected as well items that managed to fill a council pick up van. The litter pick was thoroughly enjoyed so much it became a weekly event.

One year on in 2020 the group have managed to remove 367 black bags of litter that works out to around 4 tones of rubbish or around 92 Wheelie bins full, as well as areas of fly tipping and blocked drains that have all been

reported to street pride. Natalie noticed that since she started the group they have had to go further and further on their picks to get the same amount of litter as when they first started. The group have also noticed other residents following in their footsteps and holding their own small litter picks through the estate. This has lead the group to start a Green Campaign in the area to help educate people about what can be recycled.

The group are now looking at becoming constituted in order to apply for funding for an educational project to try and prevent fly tipping of household waste in East Herringthorpe through educating people on what they can and can't recycle in their bins, expanding on what they have already achieved. As part of this Natalie has put proposals in to Ward Housing Hubs funding to ask for green projects to be undertaken in East Herringthorpe. The aim of the proposal is to start to improve the green spaces such as wildflower verges.



## GET CONNECTED - JEAN AND GWEN

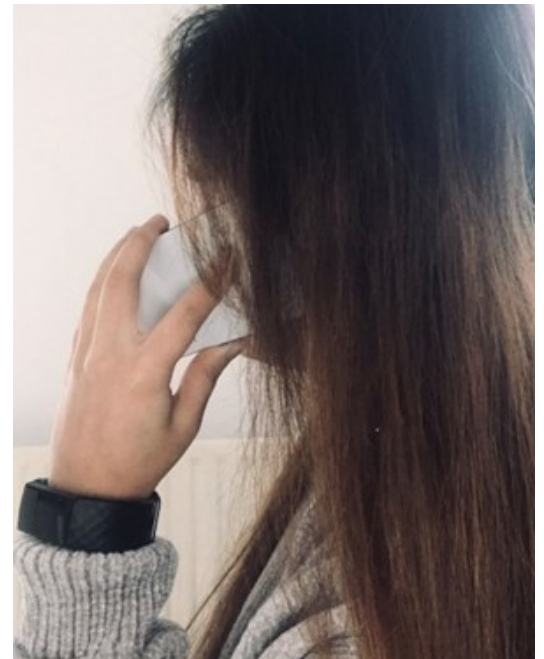
Jean and Gwen have regularly attended the 5th Age Community Group. They were both the first members of the group to ask about the digital drop-ins and what they involve.

Since Jean heard about the drop-ins that are running alongside the group activities, she has attended every session. After talking with Jean, I discovered that she had never used a smart phone, table or computer. So it was safe to say that Jean was the ultimate beginner for the digital project.

Jean began with the basics of being able to turn the tablet on and off only being able to take a small amount of information at a time each week we would recap the previous session. Slowly but surely Jean has developed the basic skills to use the Amazon Fire HD tablet that was provided for her through the 5th Age Group. Jean has competently learned how to navigate through the tablet confidently, download apps, logging onto the internet and is now enjoying playing brain stimulation games in sessions with minimal help needed. Jean is enthusiastic about learning and having fun on the tablets.

Gwen had started off with more experience with digital technologies as she has a basic smart phone but had not used a tablet before. Gwen wanted to learn how to do her grocery shopping online due to the cold dark nights in winter. After a few sessions Gwen felt confidently enough to be able to shop online. Gwen has also helped her fellow participants attending the digital drop in to help others learn the processes as well as creating a welcoming environment for others.

The group have come a long way since participating in the project and this is down to the persistence and patience of learning new concepts. They have approached every session with an open positive attitude to the tasks set in front of them. We are now at a point where we are ending learning sessions with some brain stimulation games on the tablets with a nice cuppa tea.



## FRIENDSHIP CALL - JACK

Jack was referred to the service in November 2020, he was a little unsure about engaging with the service. He is partially sighted and lives on his own. Jack has lived a colourful life working down the pit for 35 years before living in Cyprus for many years. A cheeky chap that would suit a local volunteer as he enjoys talking about local monuments.

Jack was allocated to one of our new volunteers Gill, following the first call we received feedback from Gill who was over the moon and asked if she could contact Jack again. I spoke with Jack who was equally enthusiastic about speaking again with Gill, he said "an hour passed in a blink of the eye and the dreaded Covid was not mentioned once, which was a blessing, was nice to just talk to someone normally" he added, "the conversation just flowed as we moved from topic to topic." Jack may have been sceptical, but he is certainly enjoying the calls now.



## ROTHERSTEPS

The RotherSteps project was initially rolled out over Dinnington, Ferham and Masbrough, East Dene and East Herringthorpe. It was created to combat boredom and increase fitness over the lockdown period. The project aimed to encourage participants to count the steps they took over a week using the Fitbit style fitness watches we provided. The initial project ran over 4 weeks and the groups collectively walked an impressive 6,426,767 steps.

The project was so successful we decided to run the project again across all our HRA areas so anyone across the borough could take part. This was an ongoing competition and ran in the same way as the previous RotherSteps project, with monthly prize draws for the most steps. We also give out “pot luck” prizes for anyone who enters their step counts, and also prizes for “best picture” for anyone who takes the most interesting picture of their journey in the competition.



This gave more incentives for people of all ages and abilities to take part and gave us more engagement with our communities.

We received 150 applications, 47 in Rotherham south, 69 in Rotherham central and 34 in Rotherham north.

It was launched on 23rd November and ran until 31st January 2020. Facebook groups were set up for Rotherham North, Rotherham South and Rotherham Central for participants.

The total number of steps made over the project is a staggering 16,524,882.

## FRIENDSHIP CALL VOLUNTEER - PETER

Volunteer co-ordinator Jane Owen has known Peter for a couple of years as he originally wanted to volunteer whilst in a previous working role, but found the training to be too difficult and dropped out.

Peter is a highly intelligent man and used to work as a chemical engineer for TATA steel. He started to develop mental health issues, OCD and other problems and therefore had to give up his job. He is an avid painter. He lost all his confidence and was worried when he approached Jane as a volunteer. After offering Peter reassurance that the training and induction was a lot easier than previously, he decided to give the friendship call volunteer role a go with support from Jane.

Peter was extremely nervous to make his first calls, so we allocated Peter people that we thought he would find easy to communicate with. After his first calls, he rang me and was so proud of what he had achieved, he couldn't stop saying what it meant to him to be able to give something to people and that he had enjoyed it much more than he expected.

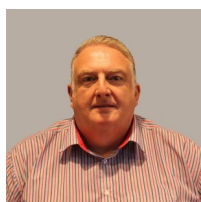
He immediately build a rapport with one of his service users, so much so that after a follow up with her, she has asked if he could continue calling her as she found him to be such a lovely person 'he feels like an angel to me, and I am sure if I met him, he would be wearing a halo' I reported back to Peter what had been said, and he was so happy so say that he would be very willing to continue calling this lady and they are now building a great relationship and Peter's confidence is growing from strength to strength.



# ROTHERFED

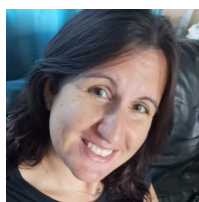
## WHO'S INVOLVED

### STAFF TEAM



**PHIL HAYES**

CEO



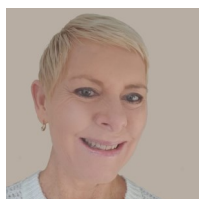
**SAM DIXON**

Community organiser



**KATHRYN WILD**

Project manager



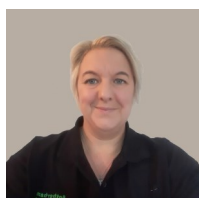
**JANE OWEN**

Volunteers co-ordinator



**SARAH FLETCHER**

Office manager



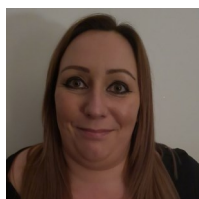
**NICOLA EVANS**

Befriending co-ordinator



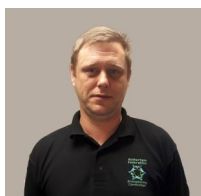
**RACHEL COLE**

Project Officer



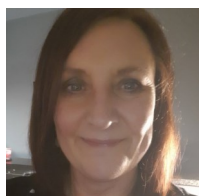
**CLAIRE STINSON**

Community support worker



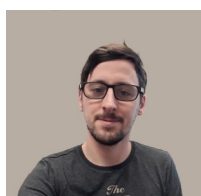
**ROB GOODING**

Community organiser



**KAREN JAY**

Community support worker



**DAN BARRON**

Community organiser



**LAURA SWIFT**

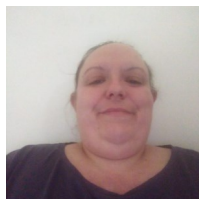
Administrative officer

## TRUSTEE BOARD



**MARY JACQUES**

Chair



**EMMA BARRATT**



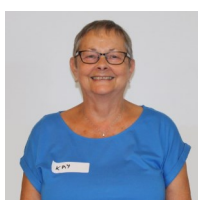
**TERRY ADAIR**

Secretary



**PAT BROSKOM**

Secretary



**KAY BACON**

Treasurer

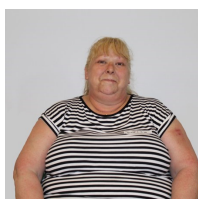


**WENDY BIRCH**

Vice chair



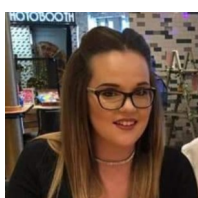
**DAVID RAMSDEN**



**STELLA PARKIN**



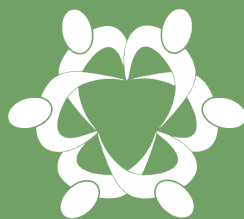
**KIM ADDY**



**ELLA WEBSTER**



**Rotherham  
Federation**



Strengthening Communities

**Rotherham Federation of Communities Ltd**

Springwell Gardens Community Centre, Eastwood View, Rotherham, S65 1NH

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