



# Newsletter - October 2024



## A very big thank you

Many of you will know, or know of, one of our longest-standing volunteers, **Elizabeth Curry**. Elizabeth has been associated with RAMA since the earliest days of its existence, when we were RA-C (Refugee Action Colchester), and when we did not even have an single room to work from, never mind a whole suite of offices, a team of 20 and four times that number as volunteers.



Over the past nine years Elizabeth, with the unwavering support of her husband Richard, has been a companion, provider, supporter, teacher, adviser and friend to countless RAMA clients. She has dedicated a huge amount of time and energy to activities that improve the wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees. She was instrumental in setting up and running the monthly Community Evenings we used to hold at Firstsite. She has taught English, organised trips, attended groups, looked after children, advocated, made coffee, prepared food, done gardening, written articles, developed partnerships, acquired theatre tickets, accompanied to events.... the list of her contributions is very long indeed. For many of our clients, Elizabeth has been the face of RAMA.



But like all good things, this too must end. Elizabeth has made the difficult decision to withdraw from such intense participation in the life of the organisation. We know she will continue to be a friend to the very many clients who regard her as a mother, grandmother, auntie, ...or simply the most reliable presence in their lives. We in the office, and the RAMA directors, are endlessly grateful for the difference that both Elizabeth and Richard have made to the lives of so many people. We know many volunteers and associates will echo this and, like us, will wish them well as they turn to other things in their lives, while they remain key members of the RAMA family.



**Thank you** and best wishes from all your friends here!



We extend sincere thanks to Martin Leatherdale and **Lion Walk Shopping Centre** for facilitating improvements to our frontage. The office is now much more obvious to clients coming for the first time, and also to partner organisations who up to now have found it equally hard to spot us. Now there are logos on the windows, a sign at right angles to the wall that is visible from a distance and a new entry buzzer system which is working extremely well.



Recent meetings held on the premises include development workshops for a **Colchester Community Archive** in association with C360 and Essex University; the **Dual Diagnosis Network** meeting—where the North East Essex Alliance team focusing on substance misuse and mental health connects the services that support affected individuals and families; and the launch of the East of England Strategic Migration Partnership’s **MigRefHealth research project** for Colchester with the universities of Greenwich, Middlesex and Anglia Ruskin (<https://migrefhealth.co.uk/>) . We have also twice hosted **GYROS** to assist clients with the transition to the new e-visa that is replacing the British Residence Permit. This highly problematic process will doubtless feature in future newsletters!

**Program Update: The Pamoja Project Launches in Colchester and Clacton!**

We are thrilled to announce the official launch of The Pamoja Project in both Colchester and Clacton! So far, 46 participants have joined us, and we’ve conducted initial wellbeing evaluations with each of them. Our early data, which spans participants from 22 countries, shows that nearly 60% are managing mental health conditions, with stress and anxiety being the most prevalent. A more detailed analysis of this data will be shared soon, but these insights have already shaped our approach to the program.



As we approach week four, we’re concluding the physical health portion of the program. Our women’s group has been enjoying Yoga sessions led by Gail and Tai Chi with Diego, sparking some fascinating conversations around self-care and physical wellbeing. In addition to the activities, we’ve been delighted to serve a wonderful hot meal at each session, offering our participants a nutritious and comforting space to connect. Looking ahead, we’re eagerly anticipating two days of Forest School, where participants will have the opportunity to reconnect with nature and further strengthen their wellbeing. **SF**



Pictures from art and calligraphy sessions run by the Pamoja Project.



For further details of the project please scan the QR code above.