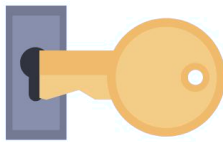


## Key Project Outputs



5 Carer support meetings



78 new services or non monetary gains accessed



£177,176 additional family income



65 families supported



Intensive advice and support with 129 new enquiries

## Context

BEMAS provides advice and support to families from black and ethnic minority communities, who have a child with disabilities and additional support needs. We do this by providing one-to-one casework with carers, and by delivering Carers support meetings on a range of topics of interest. By working together with families the service aims to build the **confidence** of those carers to get their voices heard, gain the **knowledge** they need about their rights and options, and to increase their **access** to the services and resources that will meet their families' needs.

**The families we advise face additional barriers to accessing the resources and services they need to support their caring role.** They may find it difficult to understand information provided in English and lack support networks in their local area. Families who have arrived in Edinburgh from other countries can find the systems of health, education and social services are very different to those they are used to, and difficult to negotiate. Societal/ structural racism limits opportunities for people of colour.

It is difficult for many carers to access mainstream agencies because of the lack of out-reach/ home visiting provision and services which provide interpretation (or have case workers with an appropriate language). **We connect Carers with each other, with other services and into their local communities, to reduce isolation and improve their wellbeing.**

*"I fled a domestic abuse relationship and found my self lonely and vurnlable with disabled child as well as other children. BEMAS adviser helped me to get all my financial entitlments, helped me to access services and Counselling and gave me a listening ear with no judgment. I really appreciate this service"*

## What did we do?

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**As in 20-21, Covid 19 still impacted on the BEMAS service with face to face contact restricted through much of the project year but as we approached the end of the project year face to face meetings were allowed again and many of the carers we supported welcomed and appreciated a possibility to meet again.**

BEMAS supported carers from **65 families** (55 in the previous year) **and dealt with 129 new enquiries**. Of these families, 53 received 1-1 intensive advice and ongoing support (The case study beneath illustrates the intensive nature of this support). 11 Carers attended the carers meetings only (and did not need case work support alongside the meetings). 1 carer was an early leaver and lost contact with the project in the early stages, following referral)

When we start working with a family we carry out a carer-led assessment, we ask them how things are for them, if there is anything they are struggling with and which issues are the highest priority.

We then agree an action plan with them. Families can need help with a wide range of issues for example; not having enough income to live off, struggling with managing their child's challenging behaviour, feeling isolated and living in inadequate accommodation for their child's disability. The BEMAS adviser will advise of rights and options within each area, offer assistance to complete applications and advocate on their behalf with third parties. The Adviser will make supported referrals to other agencies that can assist.

**The BEMAS service assisted Carers to access 78 services or non-monetary entitlements.** These included: Disabled child bus passes, Young Scot bus passes, disabled child taxi card, Furniture, Garden furniture, digital items, English Classes, carer training courses, counselling service, short break, Respite, Carer groups, Child planning meeting, Special educational assessment, Carer assessment, RNIB service, Access Tailor Ed service, access CAMHS, securing temporary accommodation, securing permanent accommodation, OT housing assessment, housing need assessment, Edindex, accessing help to rent service, carer support services, Early years education, Food bank, Clothing, peer support group, Young carer activities.

Advisers **secured £177,176 additional family income** (£129,293 in the previous year) This is reflected from both welfare benefit gains plus grants and funds secured to carers.

## Case Study 1: Amie

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Amie is a lone parent living with her four children in a temporary accommodation with three bedrooms. She has a son who is Autistic. When referred to The Action Group's BEMAS service Amie was looking to get support with challenging her son's, DLA in addition to getting help with finding more suitable housing for herself and her children as the current home is overcrowded: her Autistic son requires separate room due to his challenging sleeping pattern. Amie's autistic son had the tendency to run out of the house whenever he would get the chance, and this had been extremely stressful for Amie. We assisted the family to get safety measures put in place, such as extra set of safety locks to the doors leading to kitchen and outside, to minimise the risks of the son running outside. However, this did not remove the fact that the family was living in a property that was too small for the family. Amie described that the chaotic living conditions of the family had contributed to a deterioration in her mental health. This was now worsening to a point that she had been prescribed antidepressants by her GP. Amie described that she felt that she was not able to cope with her caring role and her role as a mother due to not being able to provide her children a safe and happy home that was stress-free.

Amie with the BEMAS advisor identified right away that challenging the benefit award was the most urgent matter as she had potentially lost a good amount of benefit payment, and this was contributing to financial pressures. As Amie was already feeling distressed due to her housing situation it was agreed that the BEMAS advisor would take the lead on any paperwork necessary or any following up with the benefits agency. With the help of the BEMAS advisor Amie's son's benefit award was reviewed. Amie received a backdated payment of approx. £950 that covered the time period in which Amie's son had missed out on the mobility component payments for his DLA. In addition to this backdated payment, her son's benefit rates were corrected from middle rate care component to higher rate.

Throughout this time Amie and the BEMAS advisor were in regular contact on a weekly basis. While they were working towards having the DLA award reviewed, the BEMAS advisor identified that as the Christmas holidays were approaching this may be difficult time for Amie who already was struggling financially. The BEMAS advisor got in touch with Amie to see if she would have liked for children to be added to a Christmas gift donations-list. Amie was very happy about this as she had already been dreading about the coming holidays, as she had been unsure if she could have been able to get gifts for her children. Just a week before the holidays the BEMAS advisor came by the Amie's house to drop off the wrapped gifts for the children. Amie later messaged the BEMAS advisor that the children upon returning from school had all been over the moon by the sight of the gifts.

Regarding the poor housing circumstances, the BEMAS advisor helped Amie to get in contact with her local MSP. The MSP helped to add pressure to the local housing team in charge of Amie's housing case. Amie's housing officer wrote an overview about her need for permanent housing that would be big and safe enough to accommodate the needs of both Amie and her children. The overview was then presented to the housing officer's managers who will then decide whether she will be awarded additional points that would place her in better position to secure housing through bidding on Edindex. The BEMAS advisor provided supporting statements for the housing officer who was building the case for Amie.

As Amie and the BEMAS advisor had stayed in such a regular contact throughout the months in which Amie was a client at the service, the advice worker got to really know Amie and her family well. This allowed the BEMAS advisor to help Amie identify things that caused stress and pursue potential solutions. For example, Amie explained that the 4 children had one tablet between them. They often fought over it and this increased stress levels in the home. The BEMAS adviser was able to help Amie access a grant from VOCAL to help her purchase an additional tablet for her children. The BEMAS adviser also applied for grants from the Action Group (who had several funding streams to help people in need directly). The grants aimed to support Amie with her daily living costs and buying winter clothes for kids, and an additional tablet. The grant total was £800.

Amie who already had her hands full with trying to balance with her caring role and her own mental health appreciated that there was BEMAS advisor with whom she could talk if she needed any help or advice. This became even more important further along as Amie started to expect her fifth child. Amie reported feeling very grateful and reassured that the BEMAS service would be there for her when she needed it.

## Case Study 2: Murad

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Murad is a lone parent, he arrived in Edinburgh two years ago. Murad had two children. One of them was Autistic and had very high support needs. Arriving to Edinburgh just before Lock down meant that Murad had very little support available for him and his kids.

As a Father, Murad reported that he struggled with parenting and caring responsibilities, he had financial difficulties and could not cope with daily life challenges with children.

Murad was referred to BEMAS through his Social worker, the BEMAS adviser's initial contact with Murad was over the phone. During this initial phone meeting the BEMAS adviser identified the following issues with Murad:

Murad's Autistic son was receiving DLA at lower care component. During the call Murad mentioned that his son's care and mobility needs had changed greatly since the award, the BEMAS adviser explained to Murad about requesting a supersession and what this would involve. After agreement with the carer, the BEMAS adviser initiated the supersession, the outcome of the supersession was to award the higher care component and Low mobility component which Murad was happy about.

The next step was to apply for carer allowance and add disabled child element and carer element to Murad UC.

The assistance with benefits led to an annual increase of £13,639 for the family- significantly reducing the financial pressure that they were under.

While the outcome of benefit decisions was awaited, the BEMAS adviser also applied for carer emergency grant through The Action Group and secured £400 to help Murad with immediate financial pressures.

Discussions with Murad also highlighted that the temporary accommodation they were living in was unsuitable: there was no safe space for Murad's Autistic son inside the current property as it had stairs. Murad also highlighted that due to his Autism, his son's sleep was highly disrupted and his sleeping difficulties impacted on his sibling who he shared a room with. A housing needs assessment was requested along with OT assessment and Murad was referred to Shelter to continue supporting him with his housing needs.

Next the adviser will help Murad with his own wellbeing and educational needs. The BEMAS adviser will look to connect Murad with social activities within the community, with peer support groups and carer training. This will help reduce isolation and help Murad to understand and positively manage his Autism.

### Carers Groups

The purpose of Carers Groups is to connect carers to each other, reduce isolation, improve wellbeing and increase access to information that can help people in their caring role.

The Covid 19 Pandemic continued to impact on Group activity – there was less of an appetite amongst carers to meet digitally. However, **we ran 5 carers groups. 2 digitally and 3 in person. Carers from 11 different families attended our group meetings.**

The topics of meetings are outlined beneath.

## Carers Meetings Programme 21-22

Date	Topic	Location	Number of Attendees
Sep	Carer wellbeing Session	ZOOM	5
Oct	Morning Coffee and chat	The Botanic Garden	3
Nov 27th	Breathing, Grounding and Emotional regulation	Out of The Blue, Drill Hall	4
Jan 27th	New year catch up with carers	ZOOM	9
Feb 24th	Creative Art Class	Out of the Blue Drill Hall	1*

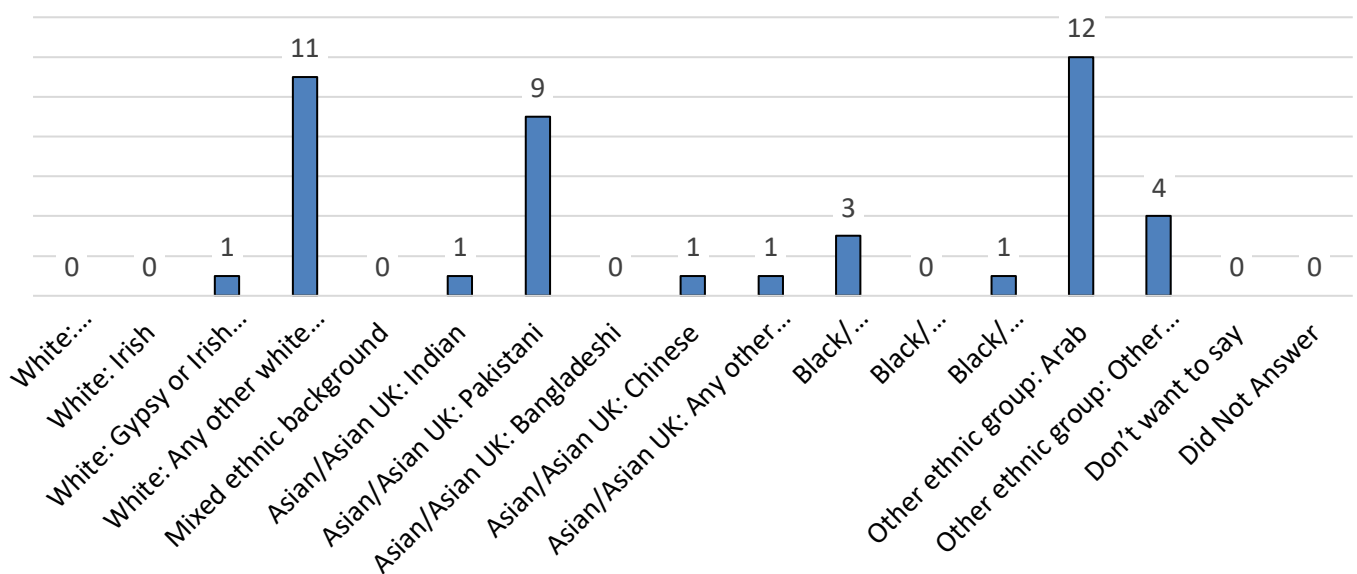
\*A large group of carers were signed up for this event but unfortunately, heavy snow affected attendance.

## Carer Information: Who used the service

\* Carers who are new to the service in this year.

### Ethnicity Breakdown 21-22:

BEMAS Ethnicity Breakdown 2021-2022



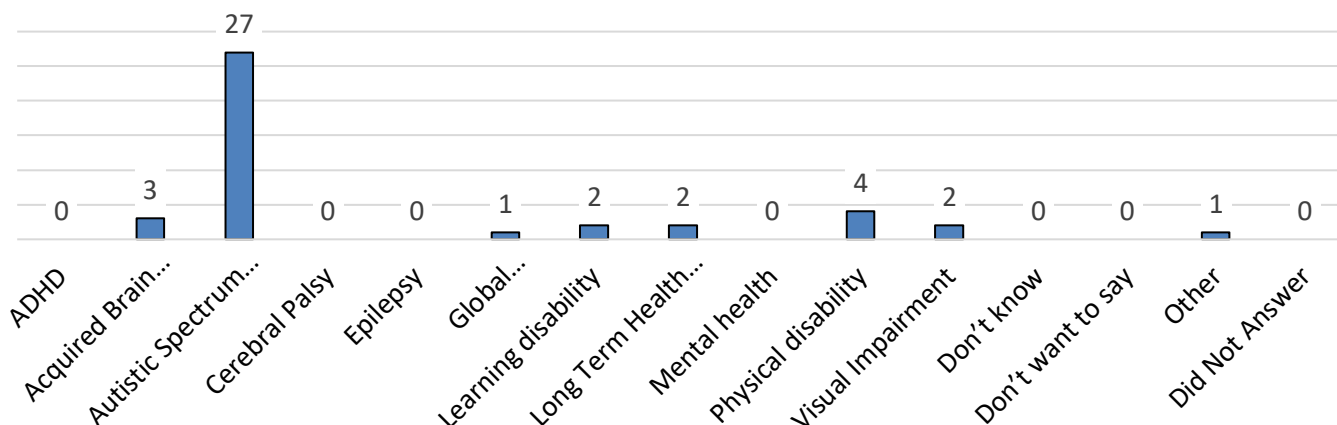
White – Any Other White Background includes; **French, Polish, Spanish**  
 Other Ethnic Group – Other Ethnic Group includes; South American, Iranian

As can be seen, the service reaches a diverse range of carers. Carers from an Arab background, formed the largest group of Carers. Part of the reason for this may be that we have an Arabic speaking adviser on the team.

**6 of the families we supported this year have come to the UK as refugees**  
**9 Carers required interpretation either for their case work or to attend Carer’s meetings.**

**Primary support need of the child being cared for 21-22:**

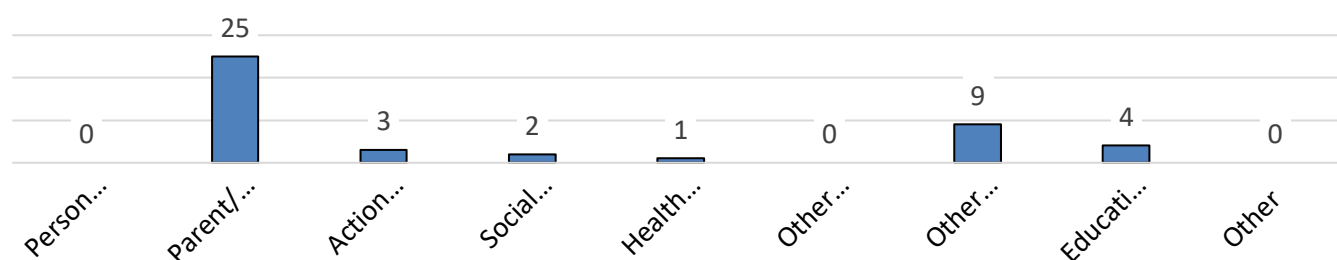
BEMAS Support Need Details 2021-2022



'Other' includes the following conditions/disabilities  
 Sickle cell disease

**Where referrals came from 21-22**

BEMAS Referral Sources 2021-2022



**Parent/Carer (Self):** includes families who have previously used the service and returned with a new enquiry. 22 carers had used the BEMAS service before. 33 carers were completely new to the service.