



Rochdale Science Initiative C.I.C.

Highly Commended – Family Learning to Support STEM Award

[Rochdale Science Initiative C.I.C.](#) (RSI) is a grassroots, community-led organisation founded in 2019 to make science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) accessible, inclusive, and inspiring for families in Rochdale.

It began when founder, Mohammed Rahman, was inspired by his son Labib's love of science and their experience of travelling outside Rochdale to find family science opportunities. From that starting point, RSI has grown into a trusted local organisation that helps turn curiosity into confidence, particularly for families from ethnic minority, low-income, Deaf, and SEND communities who are often underrepresented in traditional science spaces.

At the heart of RSI is a simple belief: science belongs in the community, and every family should feel that STEM is for them.

Their work is intentionally intergenerational, creating opportunities for children, parents, carers, and grandparents to learn together in welcoming, familiar settings. RSI works year-round with schools, community groups, universities, researchers, charities, businesses, and faith partners to deliver workshops, climate science projects, lab visits, volunteering opportunities, and inclusive engagement tailored to local needs.

Family Learning to Support STEM: Rochdale Science Extravaganza 2025 – Inspiring Climate Action Through STEAM

RSI's flagship activity is the free annual Rochdale Science Extravaganza, which has grown from a small community event into a major family science festival attracting thousands of visitors. Through hands-on experiments, live demonstrations, immersive planetarium experiences, creative workshops, student showcases, and conversations with scientists, engineers, artists, and health researchers, families experience STEM as something relevant, exciting, and open to them.

For 2025, the Extravaganza was a free, family-friendly STEAM festival built around the theme of climate change, sustainability, and recycling. RSI wanted this experience to inspire immediate curiosity and support longer-term engagement with STEM in Rochdale.

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The whole event was designed to be welcoming, intergenerational and inclusive. They chose a free, town-centre venue that families already use (Rochdale Exchange Shopping Centre), removing practical and psychological barriers to participation and helped them to reach families who may never actively book a science event, as well as creating opportunities for incidental engagement.

Families did not simply watch science being presented to them – they explored scientific ideas through practical, memorable activities linked to real-world issues, with activities designed to develop problem-solving, critical thinking, and resilience. They investigated climate-friendly plants, explored soil contamination, learned how solar panels work, saw vertical farming in action, examined microplastics, and discovered how superworms can break down plastic. Other activities introduced health data science, genetics, heart health, photon science, and astronomy, including an immersive planetarium.

RSI worked with specialist partners to provide BSL interpretation, deaf-led activity, SEND-friendly spaces, and tailored hands-on experiences. One of the highlights was a SEND-friendly sensory room featuring glowing jellyfish made from recycled plastic bottles! The sensory room, developed with artist Rachel Rea and SEND partners, created a calm and meaningful point of entry for families who can find busy STEM events overwhelming. RSI said that “partnership was not an add-on to delivery; it was the delivery model itself.”





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Impact and next steps

Over 3,300 people directly participated in the event, with a wider footfall of almost 8,000 on the day, making it the largest and most visible family STEAM event they've held to date.

Because the event reflected Rochdale's communities, with diverse presenters, culturally relevant content, and welcoming family spaces, families could see themselves in STEM. This matters deeply for learners who may never previously have met a scientist, engineer, or researcher from a background they recognise. Through the Green Careers Hub, student showcases, and direct conversations with scientists, engineers, artists, health researchers, and STEM ambassadors, STEM futures felt visible and attainable. RSI's aim was not just participation, but belonging, which they certainly achieved.

They received very positive feedback from families who said the event felt equal, calm, and accessible, which especially benefited learners who may struggle in mainstream public events.

The event helped families understand that STEM is not a narrow school subject, but something that explains the world around them and can help solve major global challenges.

The next steps for RSI are to expand and deepen their SEND and deaf-friendly provision through continued co-design with specialist partners, as well as to build stronger progression routes from the festival into follow-on workshops, school projects, and careers activities.

