

2019

Annual Impact Statement

The CommuniCare Trust (Reading)

⁸Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. ⁹Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and the needy.

Proverbs 31 v8-9

Registered Charity Number

1078694



Board of Trustees

Chair:	Andrew Taylor
Member:	Alison Burford
Member:	Martin Chalmers
Member:	Marjory Codling
Member:	Rosemary Croft
Member:	Sarah Adlard ^{new}
Member:	Helen Taylor
Bookkeeper:	Bridget Barwick

CommuniCare Staff

Manager:	Francesca Yates
Advice & Outreach:	Lynn Mann
Advice & Outreach:	Sara Harwood
Advice & Outreach:	Joanna Cowley
Advice & Outreach:	Annette Eley
Nepalese Project:	Nabin Acharya
Administrator:	Kath Tuthill ^{new}
Reception:	Dave Toney

Advice Centre Volunteers

Isabel Allinson	Marina Darby	Ian Maynard
Stephen Barnes	Sally D'Sa	Philip Pereira
Rosemary Croft	Puja Gurung	Andrew Taylor
Marjory Codling	Sue Jupp	Dave Toney
June Cox	Jacob Konadu ^{new}	Ruby Shipton ^{new}
Sheila Cox	Tara Limbu ^{new}	Manoj Sitoula ^{new}

How to Find Us



Our office is situated behind Wycliffe Baptist Church on Kings Road.

We have a private car park in Norwood Road,

Bus number 4, X4, 13, 14 or 17 stop outside the Church (Cemetery Junction).

Statement by the Chair of Trustees

Dear Supporter

CommuniCare has had another very busy year in 2019 as we helped over 5,500 clients, 15% more than in 2018. We have seen increases in all the ways we meet and help clients – at outreach sessions, on home visits and in our Centre at Cemetery Junction. In addition, over 650 clients used our public computers in our Centre at Cemetery Junction, an indication of the way access to Government services is increasingly online. All our staff and volunteers deserve enormous credit for coping with this ongoing increase in demand.

I draw your attention to the Case Studies in this Report which we hope will increase your sense of how we help our clients.

You will see elsewhere in the report that our finances remained in a good position at the end of 2018/19 we had net assets of about £155,000. We are deliberately building up our reserves against the day when funding sources such as the Big Lottery Fund and Reading Borough Council come to an end. During the year we took the decision to invest £110,000 of our reserves on a cautious basis.

I would like to thank our long-term supporters, Reading Borough Council, Wycliffe Baptist Church, St John and St Stephen's Church, St Luke and St Bartholomew's Church, St Nicolas Church Earley, and a growing number of individuals for their continued generosity. In addition to the Big Lottery funding, during 2019 we also received very significant donations from Shoosmiths Solicitors and Robert Bion & Co and continued to receive a grant from the Whitley Community Fund. We are very grateful for all this support.

In 2019, we welcomed Sarah Adlard as a new Trustee but sadly said farewell to three Trustees who stood down, Pete Dorward after more than 20 years as a Trustee, Rev Vincent Gardner after 10 years as a Trustee and Jeannie Herbert. I would like to record my thanks to them and all our Trustees, three of whom are also volunteer advisors, and to the staff and volunteers of CommuniCare for all the work they do for an organisation with which I am very proud to be associated.

Finally, thank you for your ongoing support without which we could not continue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AT', is positioned above the name of the Chair of Trustees.

Andrew Taylor
Chair of Trustees



MISSION AND VALUES STATEMENT

CommuniCare is a team of Christians motivated by their faith who care for and help people to meet their complete needs through offering information, advice and support. In particular, we look to help people who are in need, hardship or distress because of their social or economic circumstances.

We seek to do this by:

- Treating all the people we help equally and, in particular not discriminating on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity
- Always acting in the best interests of the people we help
- Working with people not issues and establishing an appropriate relationship with each person
- Empowering people in their situation and, thereby, building independence
- Being flexible in our approach and extending our service to meet the needs of an increasing number of people
- Linking people into community activities where appropriate
- Operating on the understanding that our activities are an outworking of our faith; that our “doing” derives directly from our “being” and that the link between who we are and what we do cannot be broken
- If invited, praying or sharing with people something of ourselves and our faith
- Building on our strengths as a team, demonstrating trust, patience and sensitivity to each other
- Believing that each team member has a contribution to make
- Encouraging a sense of community within our team



What We Do.

We are a charity providing information, advice and support to anyone in need. We aim to support people in understanding and navigating everyday services that they need to access to enable them to live better lives. We deal with a huge range of issues including helping with benefits checking, welfare rights, form filling and housing advice, information on living with disabilities, help for carers and much more.

We recognise that people face different challenges in accessing the services and support they need. We work hard to make our service available to as many people as we can, in ways that are most accessible to them. At our advice centre in East Reading we run daily drop in 1:1 confidential advice sessions, allowing us to see an average of 18 clients a day. Across Reading we run a number of weekly and monthly outreach advice sessions in other locations, covering the key areas across the town. For the more vulnerable clients we offer home visits.

We also work with clients to grow their confidence in what they can manage for themselves. An example of this is the work we do on Universal Credit (UC). Many of our clients are digitally excluded and this makes UC hard for them. Many have stated they do not have the skills to manage their on line account. However, with the support and patience of our reception team, we have clients who now have the confidence to use one of our public computers and manage their own UC account. In total **658 clients** came in to **use our public computers** during 2019. This has been a very encouraging for both the clients and for us.

In addition, we hold a legal clinic on the first Thursday of the month allowing our clients access to free legal advice with a qualified solicitor.

The Headlines for 2019

Total Clients Seen	5,506	up 15% on 2018
New Clients Seen	1,715	up 35% on 2018
Client Issues at Advice Centre	4,802	up 3% on 2018
Client issues on Outreach Sessions	1,153	up 96% on 2018
Client Issues on Home Visits	331	up 8% on 2018

How We Work.

CommuniCare Advice Centre

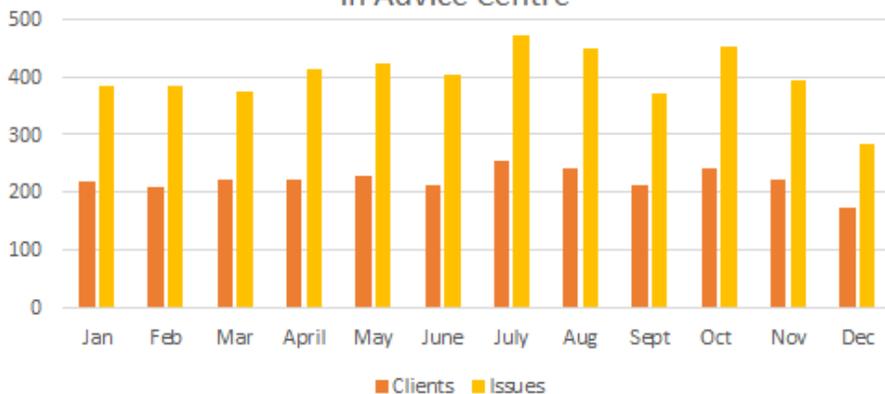
CommuniCare run a drop in service rather than an appointment system. We open at 10am every day and see clients in the order that they arrived. This does mean that our waiting room can be busy, and the waiting times can be long. However, it does mean we can see clients on the same day and there is no need for them to wait several days or weeks for an appointment. We work closely with other agencies in Reading and our service complements those of our partner agencies. Clients are often signposted to us from these agencies as they have urgent issues or tight deadlines and they need immediate assistance

At our Advice Centre, clients are given a 1:1 confidential session in one of our advice rooms. Whilst we support clients with many different issues, **60% of the work** we did in the Advice Centre in 2019 was **benefits related**. We work with clients to ensure they are receiving the benefits that they are entitled to and are needed for their daily living.



Case Study We identified that a client should be have been in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium with their Employment and Support Allowance. We collated all the relevant supporting evidence and submitted it to the DWP. The client received this additional payment and received a backdated lump sum.

Client Numbers & Client Issues in Advice Centre



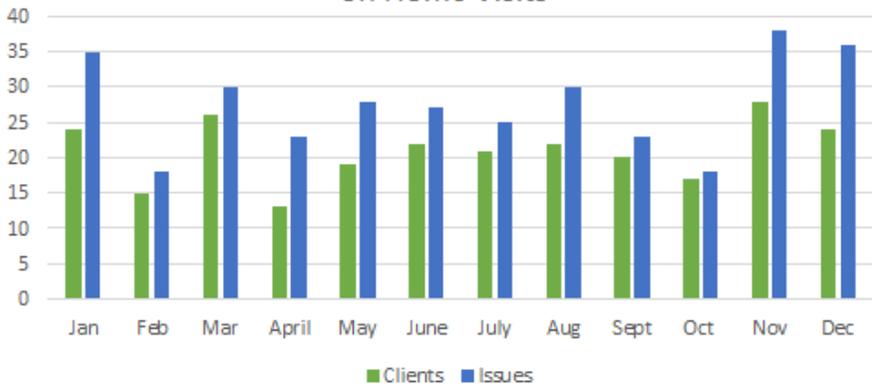
Home Visits

We offer home visits for clients who are either not able to access support out of their home at all or who have episodes when they are not well enough to visit us at the centre. The people we visit at home are some of the most vulnerable clients we support. It can take time to understand their needs and, more importantly to gain their trust. During the time we spend with the client in their home, we build a relationship and take time to understand their situation. Once this has been done we can start to address the issues the client has.

Referrals for our Home Visits come to us from other agencies across Reading, including Reading Borough Council, Adult Social Care, Health Care Professionals, Social services and the Community Mental Health Team. In 2019 just over 40% of our referrals came from the RBC Adult Social Care / Social Work teams

During 2019 **85% of the work** we did on home visits was **benefits related**.

Client Numbers & Client Issues
on Home Visits



Outreach

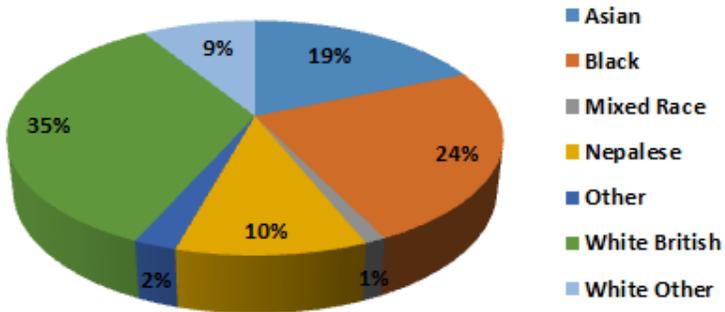
We have set up outreach sessions in areas of high deprivation in Reading and areas where we know the clients struggle or are reluctant to access services out of their local area.

During 2019 we continued to develop the new outreach sessions we had started in 2018. We have also continued to support the Job Centre with 2 sessions per week, assisting people with their Universal Credit accounts, both applications and on-going management and with job searches. We have built a good

Giving our clients time to talk shows them that we genuinely care about them and their situation. Many clients have told us we have been the first people to listen to their story, and just having us listen, and knowing we care, eases a lot of the stress they are feeling. We feel this is as important as any of the practical support we can give. We are well known for this holistic approach to our clients, and this is one of the many reasons other agencies refer clients to us.

Many of our clients have English as a second language. Through the diversity of the volunteers we have at CommuniCare we cover 12 different languages.

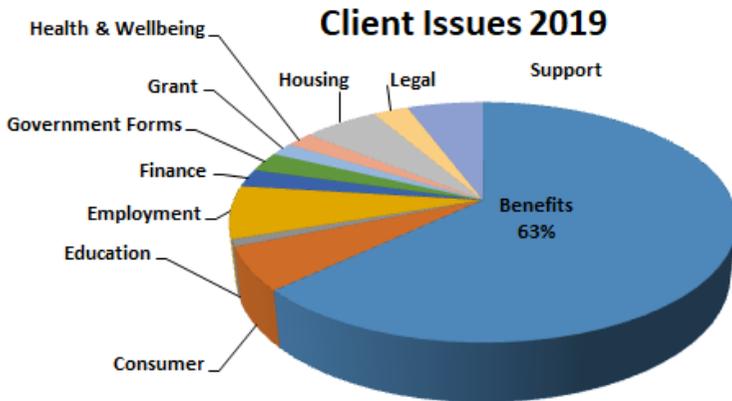
Client Ethnicity



Case Study A client came to us as their Employment Support Allowance had stopped and they were unsure why. We supported them to tribunal and were successful in getting the benefit reinstated. However, there was a breakdown in communication between the Tribunal Service and the DWP and the payments were not reinstated. This took 4 months to resolve, with the client being left in a very vulnerable state. We were able to get this resolved and have all the payments backdated to the date of the successful tribunal.

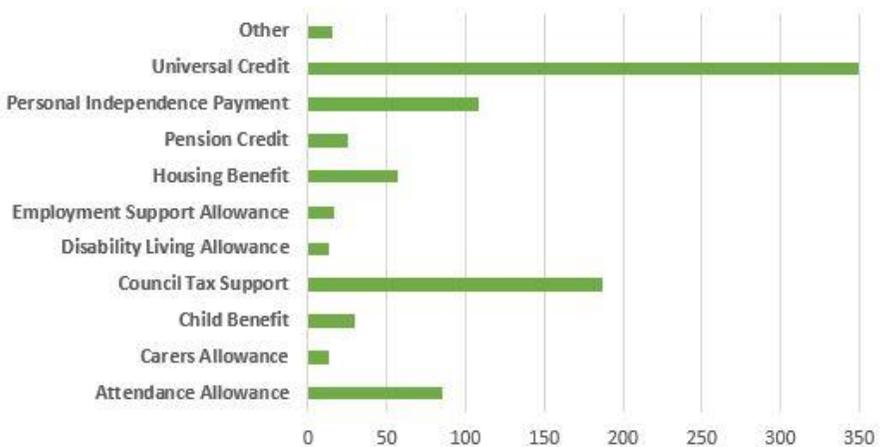
The Issues We Deal With

CommuniCare assist clients with a wide range of different issues, from benefit claims to letter writing. Clients will often come to us with 2 or more issues at any one time. Also, through the listening skills of our advisers, and the time we give to our clients, we will often uncover additional issues that the client needs support with.



During 2019 we made over 900 benefit applications for clients. The largest number being for Universal Credit.

Benefit Applications in 2019

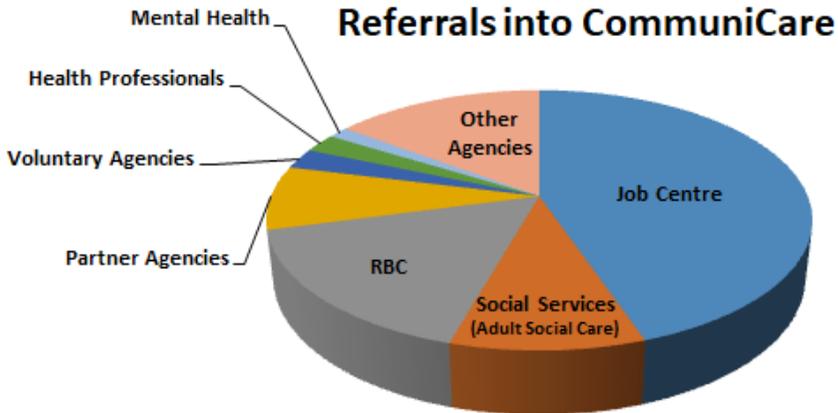


Case Study We supported a very vulnerable client with his Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application, the mandatory reconsideration and then with the appeal. The client presents well but has severe memory problems due to a brain injury. We accompanied him to his appeal hearing. We provided a statement on our dealings with the client and explained the hidden issues he has. He was awarded PIP at the hearing.



Partnership Working

CommuniCare has always worked closely with other advice & support agencies across Reading. Many of the clients we support have been referred or signposted to us from another agency in Reading.



In 2016 CommuniCare formed partnerships with other agencies to deliver a 2-year contract for 4 streams of the Reading Borough Council (RBC) Narrowing the Gap commissioning framework. In 2018, along with our partners, CommuniCare re-commissioned for this work and was successful in securing these contracts for another 4 years. This means we continue to deliver services across 4 different strands of the RBC Narrowing the Gap 2 framework.

Partnership 1 -Maximising Income.
is to provide support for individuals to maximise their daily income, manage their debts, prevent homelessness and improve their choices/ opportunities



Partnership 2 – Targeted information and advice service for people with current or emerging care and support needs.



Partnership 3 – Employability To provide support for people to take steps towards employment



Partnership 4 – Opportunities for isolated adults to enjoy social contact and so reduce their risk of loneliness. We are continuing to deliver and develop the long standing work we do with the Nepalese community.

Adult Social Care – Front Door Project

During 2019 we, along with some of our partner agencies, were approached by Reading Borough Council, to discuss whether we would be able to work with them directly, supporting their Adult Social Care (ASC) Teams, the aim being to improve the client experience. A pilot project is now running and CommuniCare advisers are working alongside the Adult Social Care Team, based at their RBC offices, for 3 afternoons per week. We are working jointly with the Adult Social Care teams, including attending home visits, and so reducing the referral times for our services and some of the workload of the ASC team. This pilot is still on-going.



Pro Bono Legal Clinic

CommuniCare run a legal clinic on the first Thursday of the month. The clinic is run with Shoosmiths Solicitors and law students from Reading University. Clients are seen by an adviser at CommuniCare first and an appointment is made for the legal clinic if they need to see a solicitor. Feedback from our clients shows that they are very appreciative for the opportunity to speak to a qualified solicitor about their situation.

Financial Details for the Financial year Ending March 2019

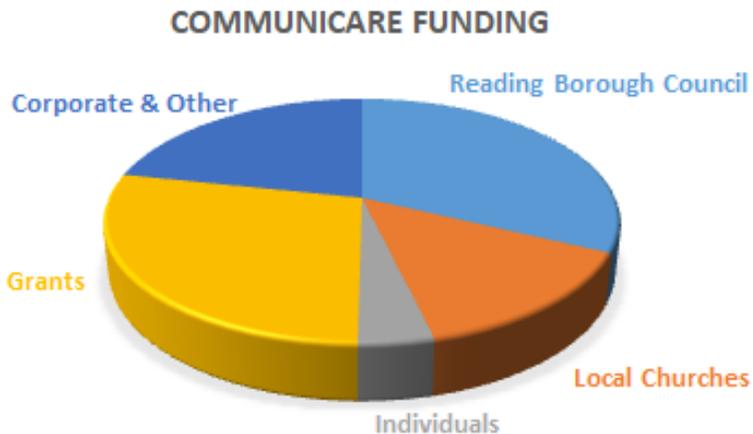
INCOME

Reading Borough Council	£45,796
Local Churches	£20,173
Individuals	£5,671
Grants	£40,004
Corporate & Other	£31,000
	£142,643

EXPENDITURE

CommuniCare Salaries	£81,974
CommuniCare Overheads	£17,205
	£99,179

TOTAL SURPLUS **£43,464**





Client Feedback

"we are so fortunate to have CommuniCare with all their helpful staff"

"I cannot believe I got all my PIP, this was so stressful for me, but you were so lovely, and my life will be so much better now"

"brilliant service to the community, thank you"

"you are all so supportive, patient and kind, I'd be lost without you"

"I am so impressed with the support my auntie got today. You people do a fabulous job"

"without your help and support I would never have got my UC sorted. I cannot thank you enough"

"I needed to apply for Attendance Allowance. You were so helpful and made me feel at ease. It was very daunting for me; I would never have been able to answer all the questions on my own. I would like to say a big Thank-you to you all for helping people like me"

Thank you to everyone who supports CommuniCare financially. Without this support we would not be able to continue helping those in need



ST LAURENCE LANDS TRUST

SHOOSMITHS



NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDED





CommuniCare Quality Marks & Accreditations



Safe & Sound. CommuniCare have received the RVA Safe & Sound quality mark. This confirms that basic governance documents & policies & procedures are in place.



AQS Accreditation CommuniCare are accredited through Advice UK and we have strict standards we adhere to.



Reading Advice Network Quality Standard. CommuniCare is a member of RAN and has achieved their quality standard



www.communicare.org.uk



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Localgiving.com/CommuniCareRDG

2019

Registered Charity Number

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