

2021

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
Treasurer:	Helen Taylor
Member:	Alison Burford
Member:	Martin Chalmers
Member:	Marjory Codling
Member:	Rosemary Croft
Member:	Sarah Adlard
Bookkeeper:	Bridget Barwick

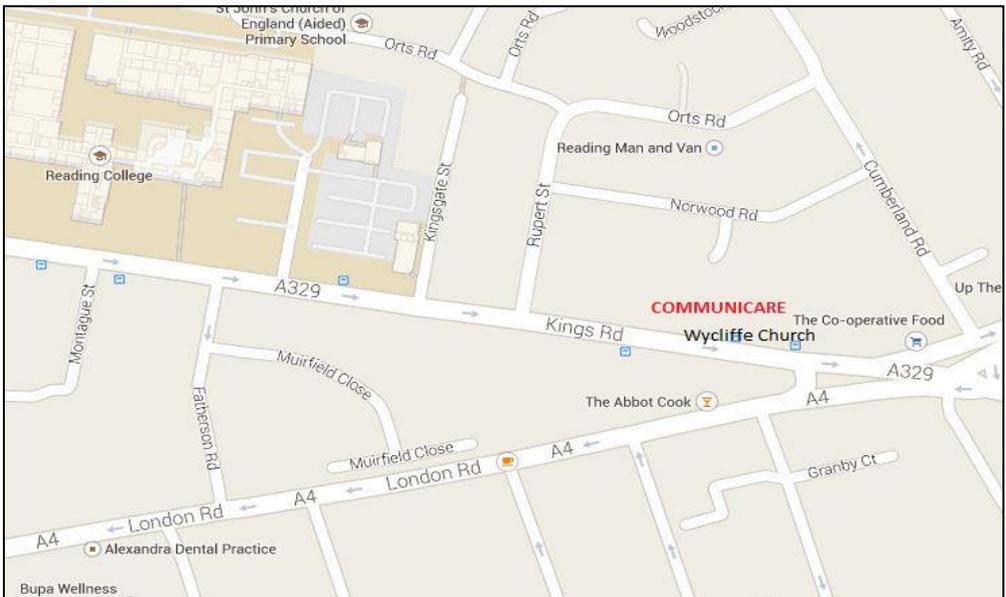
CommuniCare Staff

Executive Director:	Francesca Yates
Advice & Outreach:	Lynn Mann
Advice & Outreach:	Sara Harwood
Advice & Outreach:	Joanna Cowley
Administrator:	Kath Tuthill

Advice Centre Volunteers

Rachel Alexander	June Cox	Samantha Mayers
Isabel Allinson	Sheila Cox	Ian Maynard
Stephen Barnes	Sally D'Sa	Philip Pereira
Rukshi Brownlow	Puja Gurung	Andrew Taylor
Rosemary Croft	Sue Jupp	Helen Taylor

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).



Dear Supporter

As explained in the body of this Annual Report, we have been gradually returning to a pre-pandemic service at CommuniCare although we have yet to return to the number of clients or issues dealt with in 2019. However, in practice, our service provision has needed to be flexible as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic. Before the pandemic, our service was provided wholly through three face to face means - in our Advice Centre, through outreach sessions and through home visits. In 2020 over 50% of our clients and issues were dealt with through remote means such as telephone and email. In 2021 over 40% of our clients and issues continued to be dealt with by these means, although as the year went on the balance between face to face and remote service was gradually shifting back towards the pre-pandemic pattern. How best to meet the needs of our clients is something our Executive Director and Trustees keep under regular review.

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

We have continued to strengthen partnerships with other voluntary sector organisations in Reading and towards the end of 2021 were gearing up for the process of bidding for service provision contracts with Reading Borough Council. This process has been postponed until later in 2022 but will involve a considerable amount of effort and will have a significant impact on our finances as a third of our income comes from this source.

You will see elsewhere in the report that our finances remained in a good position and at the end of 2020/21 we had net assets of over £210,000 thanks to the fundraising work and prudent investment of funds we have undertaken over recent years. Our funding from the Big Lottery Fund, which provides about 30% of our funding and for which we are very grateful, comes to an end in 2023 and we shall be focussed on filling this gap in our funding.

I would like to thank our long-term supporters, Reading Borough Council, Wycliffe Baptist Church, St John and St Stephen's Church, Redland's Church, Shoosmiths and a growing number of individuals for their continued generosity. We are very grateful for all this support.

I would like to record my thanks to 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", written over a light blue horizontal line.

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

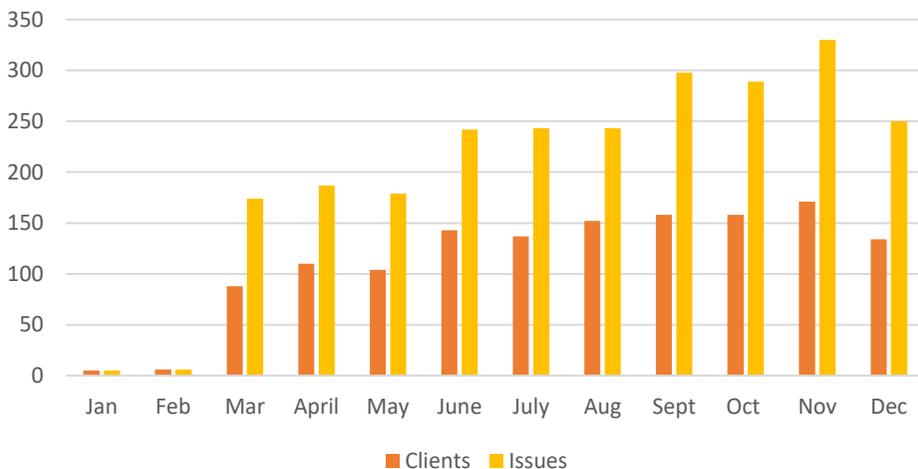
CommuniCare Advice Centre

We have worked hard to keep our Advice Centre open throughout 2021. For the first part of the year, we ran an appointment only service. This helped us to manage the number of clients we had in the Advice Centre and to work with a small team of volunteers. These appointments were offered to our more vulnerable clients and were invaluable in being able to move these clients forward. As the year progressed, we moved to our standard drop in service, but limited to 3 days. From September we re-opened our Advice Centre fully and were delighted to welcome back our full volunteer team!

At our Advice Centre, clients were given a 1:1 confidential session in one of our advice rooms. Whilst we supported clients with many different issues, **61% of the face to face work** we did in the Advice Centre in 2021 was **benefits related**. We worked with clients to ensure they were receiving the benefits that they are entitled to and need for their daily living.

Throughout this time we continued to offer a telephone and email service so we could reach as many clients as possible,

Clients Seen in Advice Centre





Case Study A housebound and digitally excluded client was in receipt of Universal Credit. The family member who had been supporting with this had passed away. The client could not manage the UC. We contacted UC and asked them to change the account to a telephone account only. They refused and said a new claim had to be made, which meant payments would stop. We challenged this with DWP and escalated the issue. DWP responded admitting that this was an issue. They changed the account with immediate effect and no loss of income. They have acknowledged the current system is not workable and they will review it.

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 to gain all the information we need to be able to support them. We take our time to build a relationship with these clients, understand their situation fully and to gain their trust. Once this is done, we can move forward with them.

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. During 2021 **74% of the work** we did on home visits was **benefits related**.

Home Visits



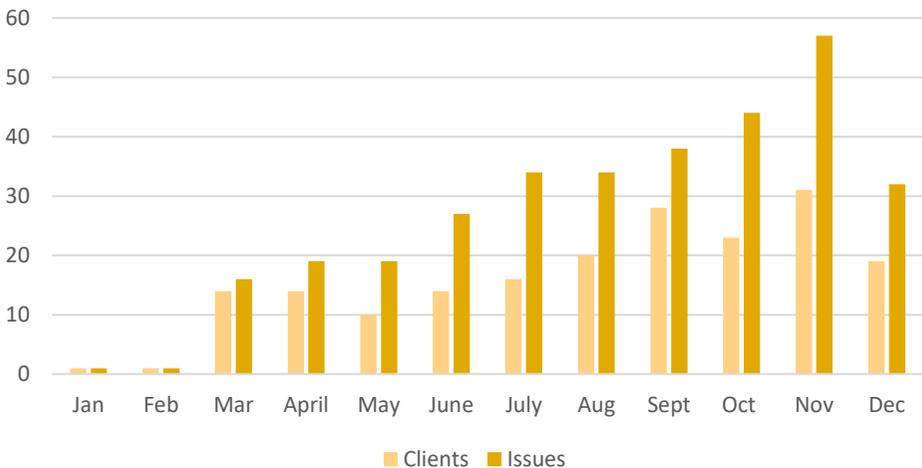
Outreach

We have run outreach sessions across Reading for a number of years. We have always focused on areas of high deprivation and in areas where we know the clients struggle or are reluctant to access services out of their local area.

During 2021 we continued to focus our resources on supporting the most vulnerable clients and working with other organisations. We continued our work with Whitley Community Development Association and supported them with an outreach session every Monday and Wednesday. Other outreach sessions we ran were paused in 2020, due to the pandemic and are yet to fully open. Due to this we have been looking at other outreach opportunities and in September we started a weekly outreach session at The Weller Centre in Amersham Road. We also have some exciting plans for additional outreach sessions starting in 2022.

During 2021, **59% of the work** we did on outreach was **benefits related**.

Outreach Clients



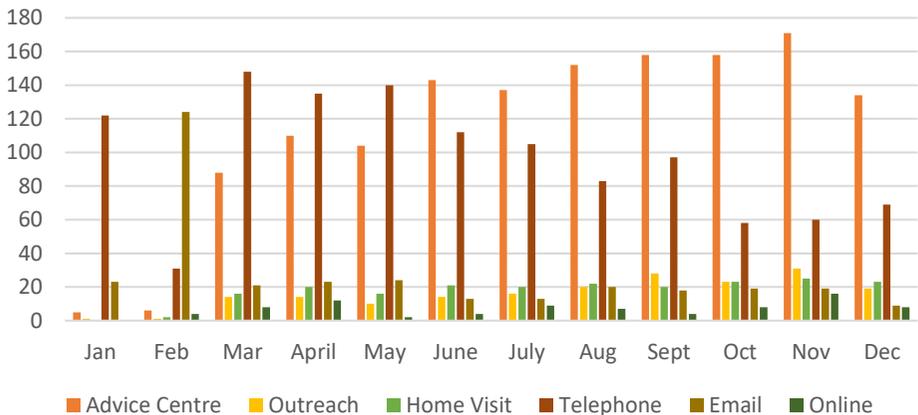
Case Study. A mixed aged couple were struggling to get their Housing Benefit paid. The husband is pension age and has Parkinsons. He has indefinite leave to remain. The wife is below pension age and does not have recourse to public funds. The correct route was to claim Housing Benefit, however, because the wife is below pension age the system would not let the claim proceed and stated it had

to be a Universal Credit claim. UC claim made (to assist with rent) but turned down as wife failed Habitual Residency Test as she has no recourse to public funds. The claim would not be paid just to the husband as he is over pension age! We tried again to apply for Housing benefit, without the wife on the claim, but it was still declined as the Housing Benefit team insisted it had to be a joint application. We tried to resolve this with Housing Benefit but ended up in a loop. We escalated up the within Reading Borough Council and the claim was then approved and the HB paid, with backpay.

Email & Telephone Support

CommuniCare is primarily a face to face service and we would normally direct clients to come in to us, or one of our outreach sessions. However, since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, we have adapted our service to include remote support via the telephone, email and on-line. This has enabled us to continue to support those clients who have felt uncomfortable leaving their home due to the risk of Covid-19.

Where Clients Supported



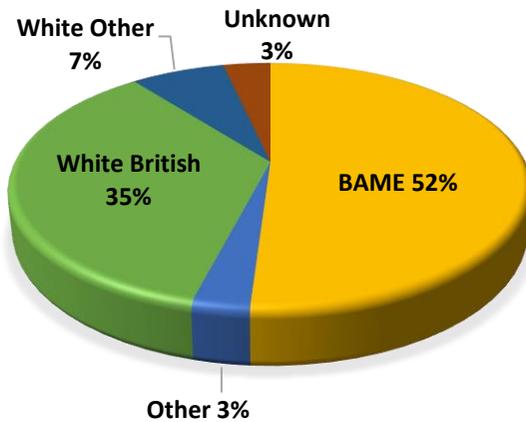
The Clients We Support

Due to the complex needs of many of our clients, and the language and literacy issues many have, we give as much time as we can to our clients. This can often lead to clients spending many hours with an adviser, however it is through allowing this time that we are able to uncover some of the many needs they have.

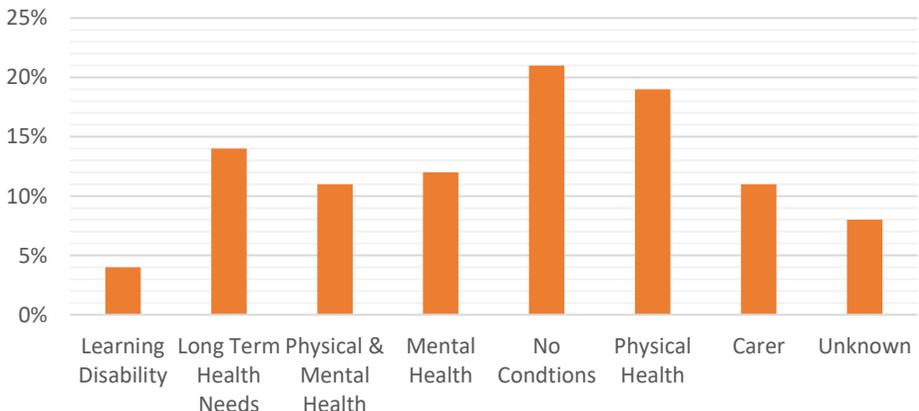
Giving our clients time to talk shows them that we genuinely care about them and their situation. Many clients have told us we have been the first people to listen to their story, and just having us listen, and knowing we care, eases a lot of the stress they are feeling. We feel this is as important 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 10 different languages.

CLIENT ETHNICITY



CLIENT DISABILITY & HEALTH NEEDS



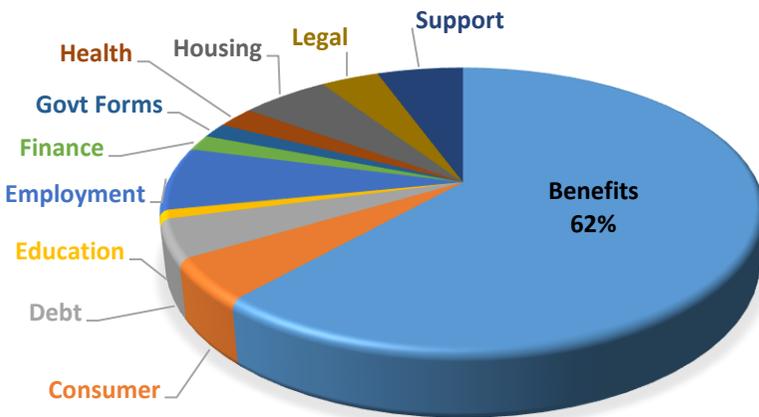


Case Study. The client had been sofa surfing for a number of years and had a chaotic lifestyle. We have worked with them in the past with regards to benefits & housing needs. In 2021 the client was offered a place to live, and he came to us for help as the flat was unfurnished and had no kitchen appliances. We took the opportunity to go through the client’s financial situation and benefits. We discovered his Universal Credit had stopped, this was because he had reached pension age, and he had done nothing about this. We worked with him and made applications for the benefits he was entitled to. We also made an application to 2 separate grant giving organisations for white goods. The client now has a new fridge-freezer and a new cooker for his home. He is also receiving **£1,567 a month in benefits.**

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.

CLIENT ISSUES 2021



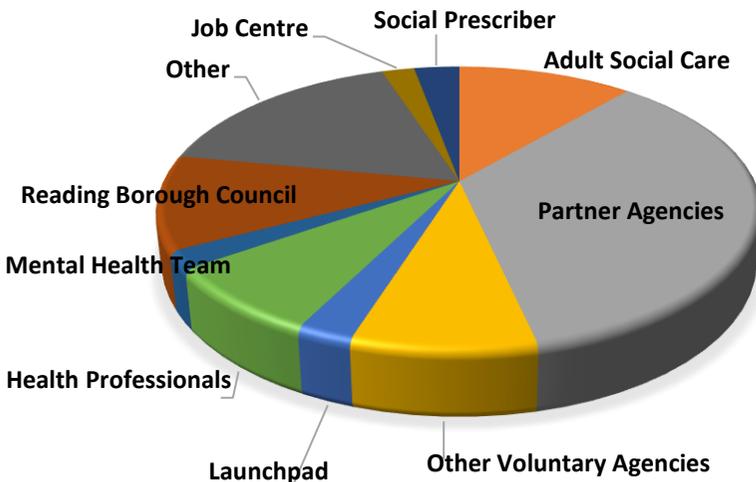


Case Study The client had problems with their benefits and incorrect information being given by the DWP. The client was in severe financial hardship and rent arrears and struggling to move forward. We looked at the situation and challenged Universal Credit on the decisions they had made. We wrote a clear and concise response detailing exactly what the client should be receiving on their Universal Credit and why. This included an additional transition payment due to a forced move from a legacy benefit, and an increase in the Housing Element they received as they were on a disability benefit and the local Housing Authority Rates should not apply. UC then recalculated correctly, A backdated **payment was made to cover the rent arrears** and the client now receives **an additional £867 per month** on his Universal Credit,

Partnership Working

CommuniCare has always worked closely with both the voluntary and statutory agencies across Reading. Many of the clients we support have been referred or signposted to us from another agencies in Reading. We have been one of the few agencies who has had our doors open for face to face support throughout 2021. Some partners have been unable to offer this, but our joined up working means these organisations have been able to refer clients to us.

REFERRALS INTO COMMUNICARE



Pro Bono Legal Clinic

For many years CommuniCare have run a legal clinic on the first Thursday of the month. The clinic is run with Shoosmiths Solicitors and law students from Reading University. This has continued in 2021 but we have maintained the adapted service we ran during 2020 due to the pandemic. Clients still meet with a CommuniCare adviser first, and then, if appropriate, are referred to the solicitors. The solicitor will review the case and then advise by email and, if necessary, via an on-line meeting. This has continued to run well, and we are currently assessing how we want to work. For 2022.

CommuniCare Client Feedback during 2021

"Your work is invaluable. How would people manage if you were not here? Thank you for all that you do"

"Thank you so much for helping me resolve my parking fine. It has been cancelled! You gave me the strength when I needed it to continue fighting against it. Your time and advice was much appreciated!"

"I got it! I couldn't have done this without you. I got the ESA and I was put in to the support group; I am now getting twice as much as I was before. Thank you for all your hard work and for encouraging me to continue fighting, I was ready to just give up."

"You guys are great! I wouldn't go anywhere else"

"UC have been a nightmare, but you have made them listen. I was so stressed, and no one was listening to me. You were kind and patient and got it all sorted. I am so relieved. Thank you."

"Thank you for helping us apply for Attendance Allowance for my Dad. We have been so worried about him but found the forms so overwhelming. Now he has this additional money it will help him pay for some extra support at home. You do great work"

"I have been so stressed, but you have really put me at ease and helped me work through all of this. Thank You. You are amazing"

"I have finally got my PIP. It has been hard and I would not have done it without you. Thank you"

Financial Details for the Financial Year Ending March 2021

INCOME

Reading Borough Council	£47,865
Local Churches	£14,781
Individuals	£3,484
Grants	£60,957
Corporate & Other	£17,236
	£144,323

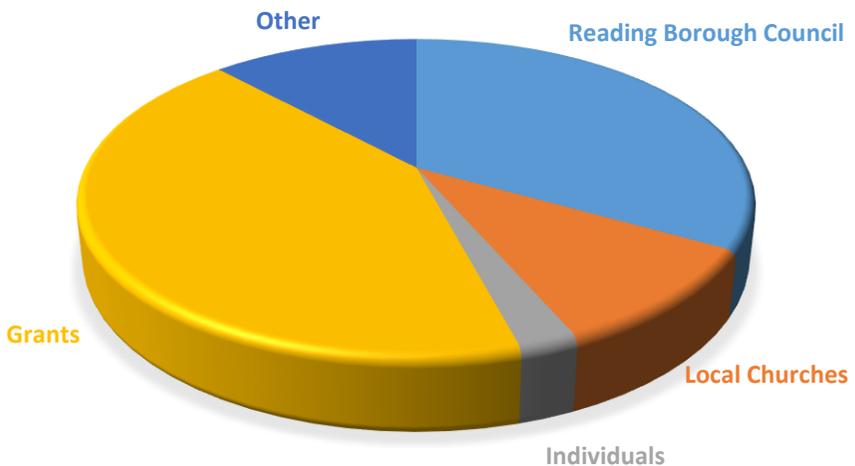
EXPENDITURE

CommuniCare Salaries (& pensions)	£94,430
CommuniCare Overheads	£11,395
	£105,825

TOTAL SURPLUS

£38,498

COMMUNICARE FUNDING YEAR ENDING MARCH 2021





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



If you would like to support our work, you can donate on our Local Giving page.



Localgiving.com/CommuniCareRDG

CommuniCare Quality Marks & Accreditations



AQS Accreditation CommuniCare are assessed every 2 years for this accreditation, through Advice UK. Our last Assessment was in 2020 and the assessor noted 5 areas of excellent practice.

Follow Us:



www.communicare.org.uk



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Registered Charity Number

1078694

