

2022

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

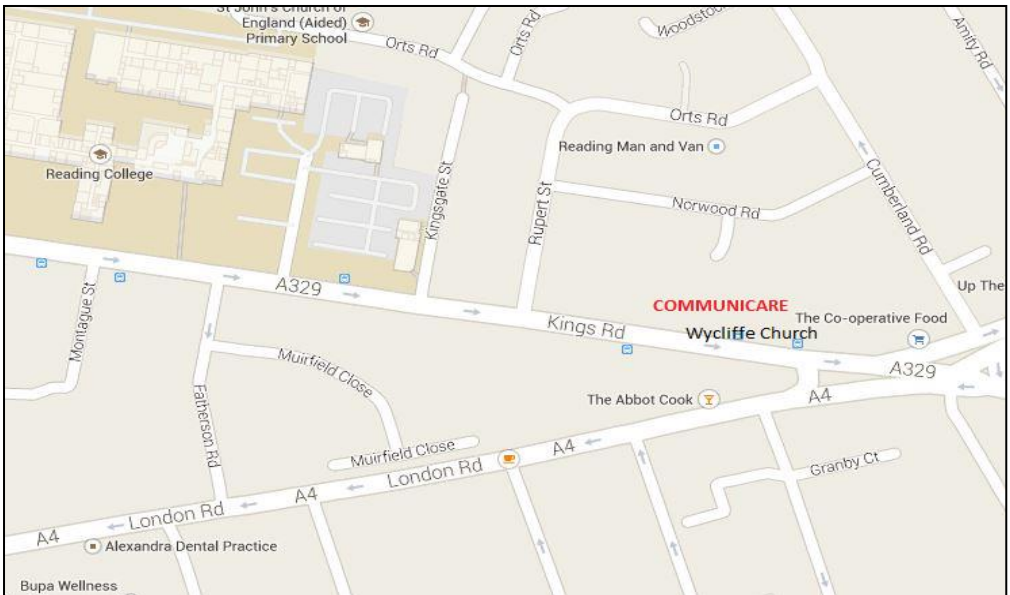
CommuniCare Staff

Executive Director:	Francesca Yates
Advice & Outreach:	Lynn Mann
Advice & Outreach:	Sara Harwood
Advice & Outreach:	Joanna Cowley
Advice & Outreach:	Dave Toney ^{New}
Advice & Outreach:	Hayley New ^{New}
Administrator:	Kath Tuthill

Advice Centre Volunteers

Isabel Allinson	Sally D'Sa	Samantha Mayers
Stephen Barnes	Krishanthi Dissanayake ^{New}	Ian Maynard
Rukshi Brownlow	Puja Gurung	Philip Pereira
Rosemary Croft	Neil Hooley ^{New}	Andrew Taylor
June Cox	Natalia Jagodzinska ^{New}	Helen Taylor
Sheila Cox	Sue Jupp	

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

I would like to highlight that CommuniCare's mission set out in this statement remains unaltered and the work of our team of staff and volunteers goes on with a high degree of consistency from year to year. I encourage you to read the whole of this report to gain a fuller picture of the scope of the work we do, the ways in which we do it and the outcomes for clients both in practical terms, often financial, and in terms of their wellbeing. I am sure that you will recognise the importance of this work particularly in these times of high cost of living, increasing inequality and struggling public services.

In 2022 Reading Borough Council invited bids from the voluntary sector to carry out work in the community on their behalf some of which would, in the past, have been undertaken by the Council itself. I am pleased to be able to report that as a result of very effective partnership working and hard work and commitment by all involved, not least by our Executive Director, Francesca Yates, we were successful in all three of the bids we submitted. The new partnerships formed as a result of this process are:

- Tackling Poverty Partnership with 6 other voluntary sector organisations providing a wrap-around service for those most in need.
- Wellbeing Partnership with 3 other voluntary sector partners providing support for those in need of care.
- Carers Partnership with 3 other voluntary sector organisations which provides care and assessments for carers in both Reading and West Berkshire.

This has provided some degree of financial stability for CommuniCare for the next few years and has enabled us to increase our paid staff by two.

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 also 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 "ATaylor".

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 the 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.

Where We Work.

We recognise that people face different challenges in accessing the services and support they need. We make our service as accessible as we can, to as many people as we can. At our advice centre in East Reading we run daily drop in 1:1 confidential advice sessions Monday to Thursday. Across Reading we run a number of outreach advice sessions based in community locations. For the more vulnerable clients we offer home visits.

Our Clients

Our clients face many barriers in their day to day lives, such as English as a second language; low literacy levels; poor mental health; being digitally excluded and homelessness. These are some of the more vulnerable people in the town, and those that are in the most need of help. We offer an holistic approach and walk alongside our clients, working with them to access the benefits & support they need. We work with clients to help them grow their confidence and become empowered in the decisions they must make, working with them until they feel able to do this.

The Headlines for 2022

Total Client Issues Supported	6,329	23% increase on 2021
New Clients Supported	2,019	40% increase on 2021
Clients Issues face to face	4,988	57% increase on 2021
Client Issues by Email	313	15% increase on 2021
Client Issues on the telephone:	1,028	35% decrease on 2021



Case Study: A client came to see us as his Universal Credit (UC) had stopped. We realised this was because he had reached pension age. We made an application for Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. The client is now in receipt of all the correct benefits and receives an **additional £1,142 per month**



How We Work

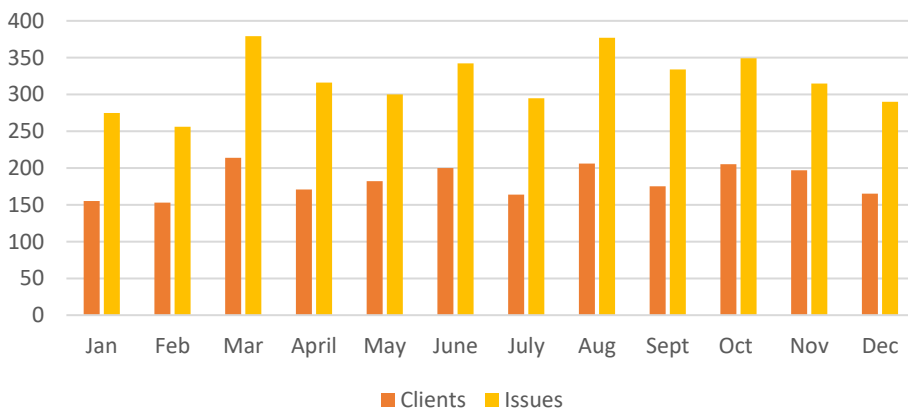
CommuniCare Advice Centre

CommuniCare run a drop in service rather than an appointment system. We open at 10am Monday to Thursday 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 means 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. We do not limit the amount of time a client spends with an adviser as many come in with multiple issues, and also, due to the chaotic lives some clients have, we recognise that we may only have the one opportunity to support them.

Whilst we support clients with many different issues, **58% of the work** we did in the Advice Centre in 2022 was **benefits related**. We work with clients to ensure they are receiving the benefits that they are entitled to and challenge any incorrect decisions made by the DWP.

Clients Seen in Advice Centre





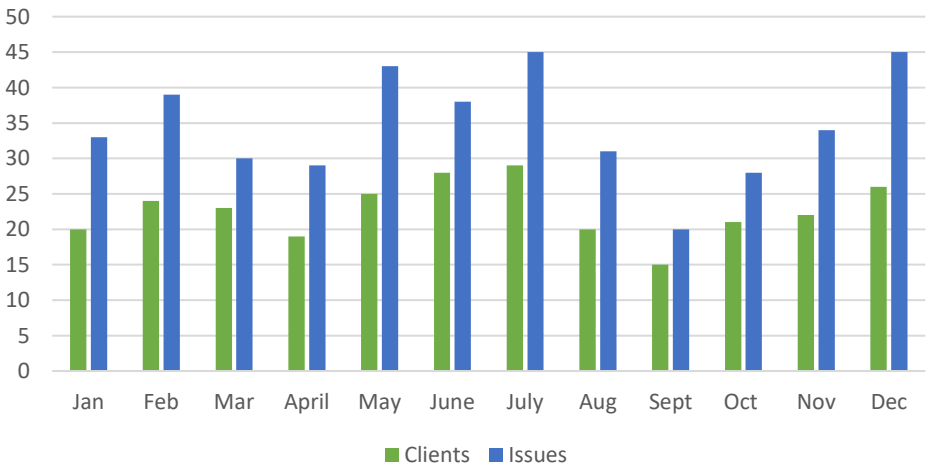
Case Study: client was a young Care Leaver. She received a large electric bill. The meter readings were incorrect but the supplier would not accept this. We did a visit to the client’s home and checked the meter readings and took a photo for the supplier. We identified that incorrect meter readings had been given by previous tenants and now our client was being charged for all the shortfall. We spoke again to the supplier and explained this. They agreed that this was the case. They agreed to **write off £1,900 from the bill** and adjust the client’s monthly payment.

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.

Referrals for our Home Visits come to us from other agencies across Reading, including other voluntary sector organisations, Reading Borough Council, Adult Social Care, Health Care Professionals, Social services and the Community Mental Health Team. During 2022 **74% of the work** we did on home visits was **benefits related**.

Home Visits



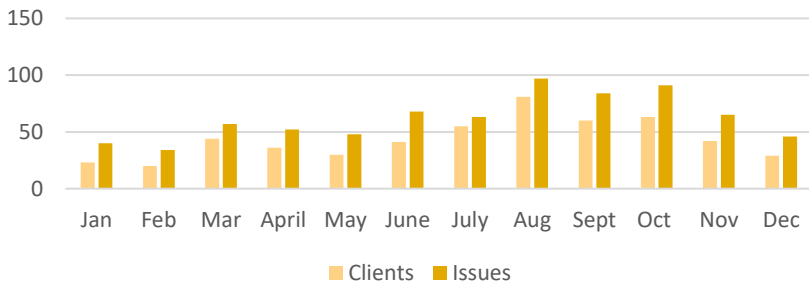
Outreach

We run outreach advice sessions in different areas around Reading. We partner with local community groups or services so we can run our advice service alongside services that are already being offered. This also increases our visibility and ensures that we can reach those who need our service most. Our focus is in areas where we know the clients struggle or are reluctant to access services out of their local area.

During 2022 we continued our work with Whitley Community Development Association and supported them with an outreach session every Monday and Wednesday. We worked with the Weller Centre and ran a weekly outreach at the centre in Amersham Road, and we continued our outreach inside the Job Centre Plus.

We also spent 2022 working with other organisations to review where our outreach services would be of most benefit. We have identified 4 new locations and have recruited a new member to the team to cover this work. This will all go live in January 2023.

Outreach Clients



Case Study: A client was released from hospital into temporary accommodation. He was housebound and had no income. We worked with other agencies to offer wrap around support, including hot meals being taken to him and clothes and furniture being provided. We assisted him in applying for Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and worked with the RBC Homelessness

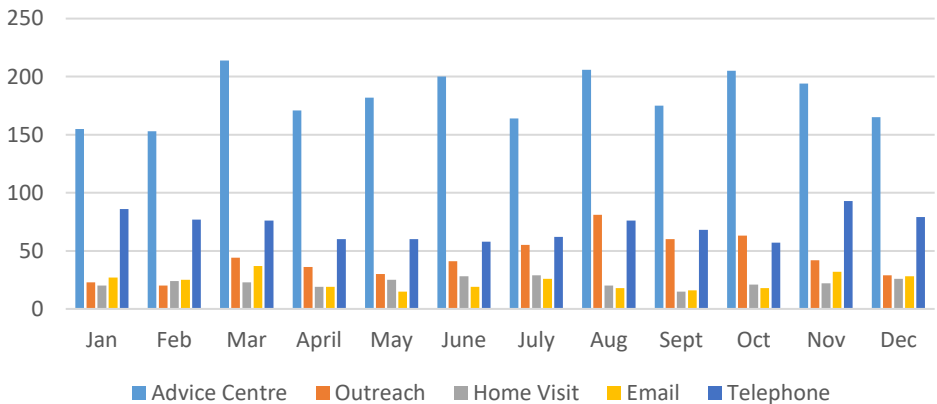


Prevention Team to help him complete the referral for housing. The client is **now in receipt of £1,239 benefits per month**

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. There are times when a telephone conversation, or email exchange, are enough for the client. This also eases pressure on our waiting room.

Where Clients Supported



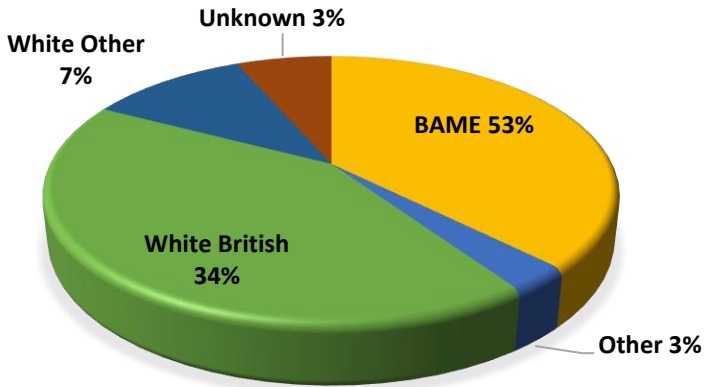
The Clients We Support

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.

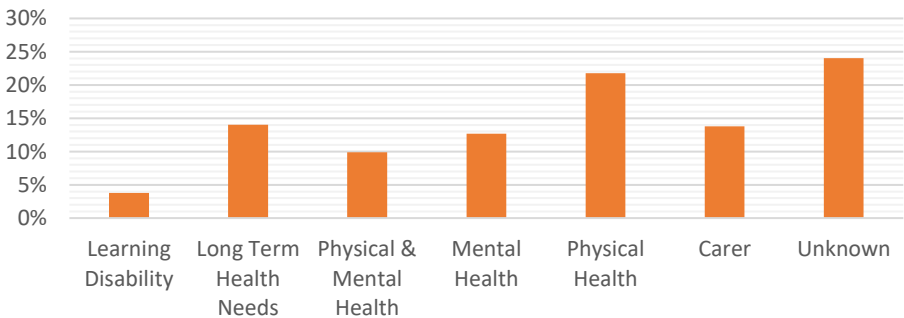
Many of our clients have English as a second language. Through the diversity of the volunteers we have at CommuniCare we cover 9 different languages.

CLIENT ETHNICITY



Many of our clients have health conditons, both mental health and physical health. We are also supprot Carers who are caring for children or adults with health needs.

CLIENT DISABILITY & HEALTH NEEDS



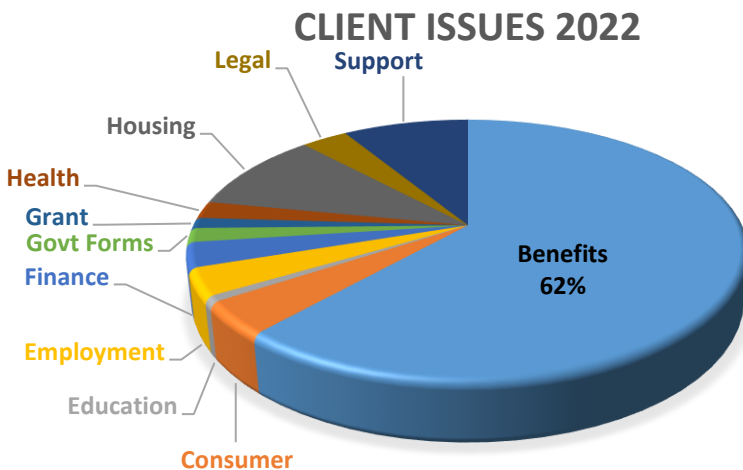
Case Study: We have worked with a client who was turned down for PIP, scoring zero points on his assessment. We put together a detailed Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) showing the client should have received 18 points (enhanced rate) for Daily Living and 10 points (standard rate) for Mobility. The MR was successful, and

the client is **now in receipt of £506 PIP per month**. We have also supported this client with their UC claim and successfully appealed the DWP decision for limited capability for work. He is **now in receipt of an additional £354 UC per month**.

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.

In 2022, **62% of the issues** we dealt with were **Benefits** related. In total we assisted clients to claim the annual equivalent of **£3,676,468 in benefits**



Case Study: We received a referral for a non-verbal 20 year old with complex needs. She needed to apply for UC. We visited the family at home and worked with the family to apply for UC. The 20 year did not have a mobile as non-verbal, and the family did not have a mobile phone that could be used. We supported the family

in getting a cheap mobile phone purely for use with UC. We assisted them to create the account and make the application. We arranged for the Work Capability Assessment form to be sent immediately. We returned and helped them to complete the form and return it. Limited Capability for Work-Related

Activity element was granted on the UC. The client **now receives £620 UC per month..**

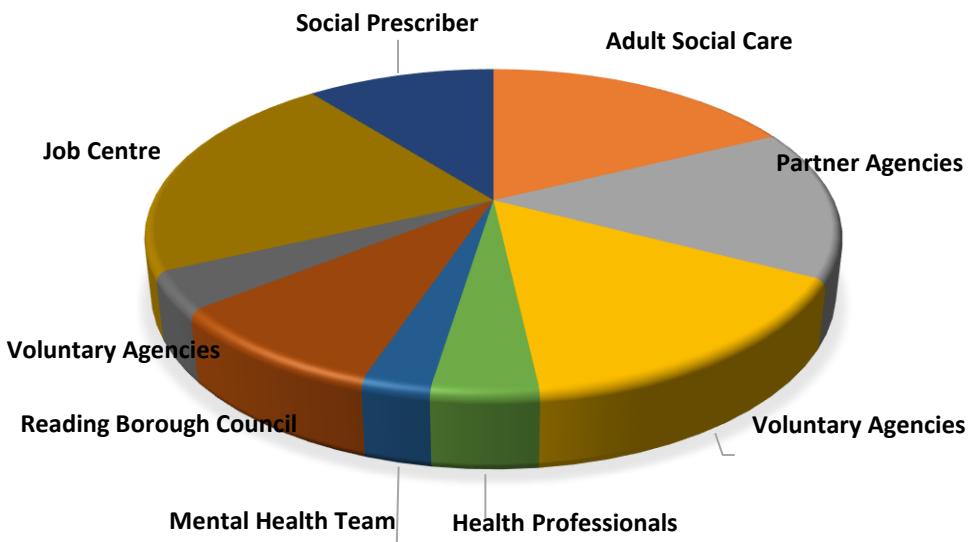
Partnership Working

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 other agencies in Reading.

For the past 4 years we have worked in formal partnerships with other organisations and have received funding to deliver services for the local authority.

At the end of 2022 the current partnership contracts came to an end. We have formed 3 new partnerships that will work to deliver services for RBC. These new partnership contracts started in Nov 2022. These partnerships will ensure that clients receive the wrap around support they need.

REFERRALS INTO COMMUNICARE



Pro Bono Legal Clinic

The Legal clinic is run with Shoosmiths Solicitors and law students from Reading University. In 2022 we worked with Shoosmiths & The Law School to recruit 6 new law students to join the legal clinic team, as the previous students have now graduated. Initially clients meet with a CommuniCare adviser so their situation can be assessed. If their case is appropriate, they are referred to the Shoosmiths. The solicitor will review the case and then advise by email and, if necessary, via an on-line meeting.



Case Study: Client was held liable for the clearance of a property that a family member had lived in. The family member had passed away and the client was made to pay to clear the property. The solicitor advised on this case and all monies paid by the client were refunded.

CommuniCare Client Feedback during 2022

“I feel a lot less anxiety now that someone understands me & knows how to help me. I feel supported”

“I can’t explain what a great help you have provided me. Not only have I been helped, but everything has been explained so clearly. I would have been totally lost had it not been for your help – thank you”

“I have received the attendance allowance, and I have been given the higher rate. I cannot believe it. Thank you so much for coming to see me and helping me with this. I could not have done it on my own. This extra money will make such a difference.”

“Everyone is super, friendly, helpful and lovely!”

“Thank you so much for everything you have done for me. I have come here many times and always been really pleased with the help you have given me”

“Thank you for all the help you have given me with my housing and my benefits. I never thought I would finally get somewhere of my own to live! My UC is now being paid and the rent is covered. I also have the fridge and cooker that you got for me! Thanks”



Financial Details for the Financial Year Ending March 2021

INCOME

Reading Borough Council	£40,022
Local Churches	£15,314
Individuals	£3,729
Grants	£44,062
Corporate & Other	£4,683
	£107,810

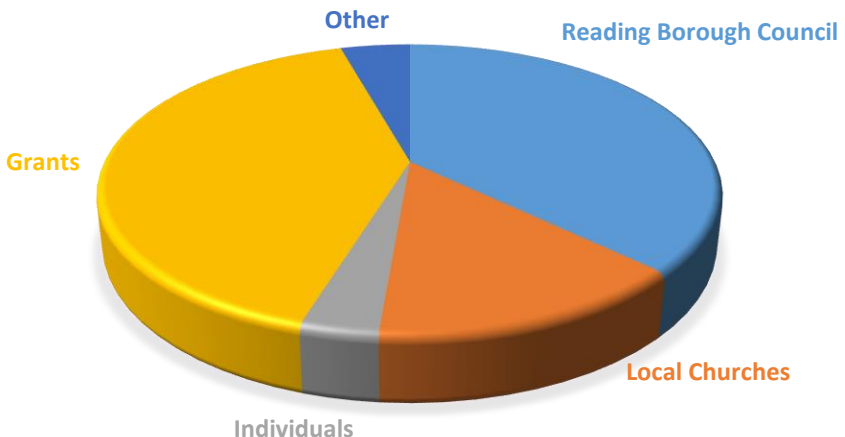
EXPENDITURE

CommuniCare Salaries (& pensions)	£95,759
CommuniCare Overheads	£9,406
	105,165

TOTAL SURPLUS

£2,645

COMMUNICARE FUNDING FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 2022





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 November 2022 and the assessor noted 6 areas of excellent practice.

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www.communicare.org.uk



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Contact Us:



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