

2025

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: Gary Brooks
Treasurer: Helen Taylor
Member: Alison Burford
Member: Donald Chambers
Member: Rosemary Croft
Member: Andrew Taylor
Bookkeeper: Bridget Barwick

CommuniCare Staff

Executive Director: Francesca Yates
Advice & Outreach: Lynn Mann
Advice & Outreach: Sara Harwood
Advice & Outreach: Joanna Cowley
Advice & Outreach: Tara Hensford
Advice & Outreach: Hayley New
Administrator: Edyta Worozbit

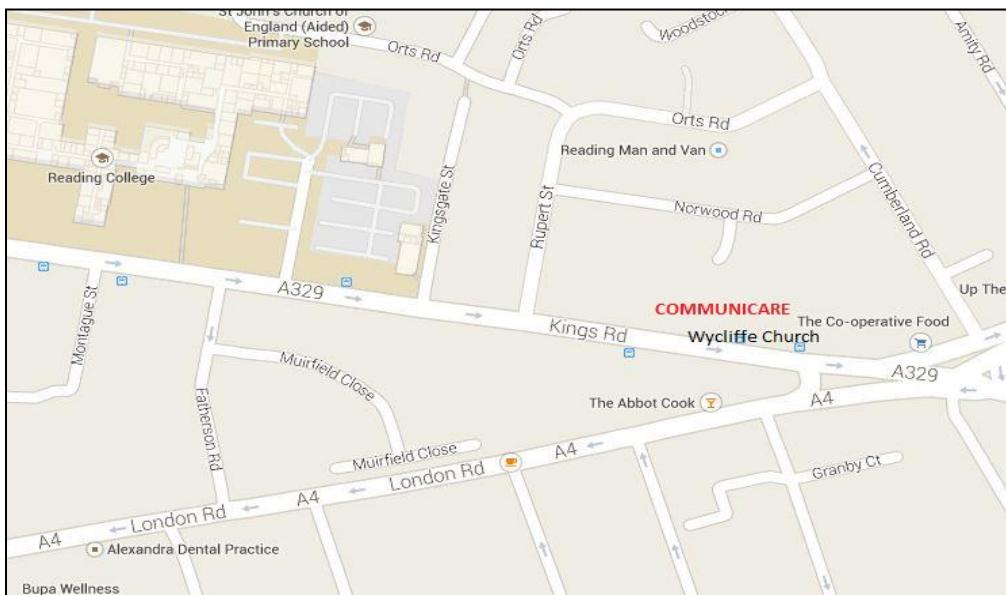
Advice Centre Volunteers

Oyinda Adewomi^{new}
Isabel Allinson
Stephen Barnes
Rukshi Brownlow
Rosemary Croft
Mike Crone

Sheila Cox
Sally D'Sa
Puja Gurung
Stephanie Hall
Neil Hooley
Sue Jupp

Susie Matheson ^{new}
Moira Oram
Philip Pereira
Ursula Somers ^{new}
Andrew Taylor
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, 4a, 13, 14 or 17 stop outside the Church (Cemetery Junction).



Dear Supporter

It is early January once again which means it is time for another introduction to CommuniCare's Annual Impact Report. It is also my first having taken over from Andrew as Chairman in April 2025. My first duty must therefore be to thank Andrew for his time as Chairman, for his service and dedication to the charity and his continuing support to me personally. Whilst Andrew has retired as Chairman, he continues as a Trustee and Volunteer.

You will see from this Impact Report that we have helped over 5,000 people in 2025, a decrease on the previous year. There are a variety of reasons for this and we continue to look for ways to make CommuniCare more accessible to those who still very much need our assistance.

The largest group of issues dealt with continues to relate to benefits, over 50% of enquiries, and we assisted clients to claim the equivalent of over £5.6m in benefits in the year. Whilst helping people navigate the benefit system remains the largest area of our work, housing and carer issues rate second and third along with a plethora of other issues.

As Andrew made you aware in his introduction last year, a large proportion of CommuniCare's income came from three contracts we had with Reading Borough Council in partnership with other local voluntary organisations. These were due to end during the financial year 2025/26. We were successful in two of the three areas for which we tendered. My thanks to Francesca for the significant amount of work she did to achieve this. Obviously, the loss of funding for the third means that we have a shortfall in our income but rest assured we are financially sound for the time being.

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 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 number of individuals for their continued generosity. We are very grateful for this.

I would also like to record my thanks to all our Trustees and to all the staff and volunteers at 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.

Gary Brooks
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

We are a team of Christians motivated by our faith to help others.



Who we are:

We are a Christian led 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 large range of issues including benefits, form filling and housing advice. We work closely with both voluntary & statutory sector groups across Reading to provide the wrap around support our clients need.

In 2025 we supported 5,278 clients with 6,768 issues

How we work:

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.

In 2025, nearly three-quarters (74%) of clients received face to face support

Due to the complex needs of our clients, and the language and literacy issues many have, we give as much time as we can. This can lead to clients spending many hours with an adviser. Allowing this time enables

us to uncover some of the many needs they have.

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.

Where we are:

We aim to make our services as accessible as possible to everyone in Reading. Our Advice Centre in East Reading is open Monday to Thursday for confidential one-to-one drop-in sessions.

In addition to the Advice Centre, we run several weekly outreach sessions at community locations across the town, helping us reach as many people as possible. Clients can also contact us by phone, email, or through the online enquiry form on our website. For clients with greater needs, we offer home visits to ensure support is accessible to all.



The CommuniCare Advice Centre

In 2025, over half (52%) of the work done in our Advice Centre was benefits related

We run a drop-in service rather than an appointment system. The Advice Centre opens at 10am and clients are seen in the order they arrive. This allows us to provide same-day support without the need to wait days or weeks for an appointment. Each

client receives a confidential one-to-one session in one of our advice rooms. We do not limit the time spent with an adviser, as many clients present multiple issues. We work closely with other agencies in Reading, and many clients are referred to us by partner agencies when urgent assistance is needed or deadlines are tight.

Case Study: The client's Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application was turned down. We assisted the client to appeal this decision. The appeal was successful and they were awarded the enhanced rate for both daily living and mobility. The client now receives monthly PIP payments of **£790.62 per month** (£9,487.40 per year)

CommuniCare Outreach Sessions

We run outreach advice sessions across Reading, partnering with local community groups to provide support alongside services already offered. In 2025, and continuing into 2026, we have focused on local food pantries, helping those who are "just about managing" and providing support to prevent people from falling into crisis.

We continually review our outreach locations and consider new sites as needs are identified, with the aim of making our services accessible to as many people as possible.

In 2025, over half (51%) of the work done at outreach sessions was benefits related

Message from Southcote Food Pantry: "I wanted to express my sincere thanks for the amazing work you've been doing at Southcote Pantry this year. Your willingness to offer free advice and support on a drop-in basis has made a tremendous difference to so many people who walk through our doors. I regularly hear from individuals who tell me how your guidance has helped them navigate difficult situations, understand their rights, and move forward with far more confidence and hope.

The impact you've had is real and deeply felt. Your dedication, compassion, and expertise have made this service not only valuable but truly life-changing for many. I am incredibly grateful for the time and care you invest in every person you meet, and I want you to know how much I appreciate and value you.

Thank you for being such a vital part of what we do. It's an honour to have you working alongside us."

CommuniCare Home Visits

In 2025, two-thirds (66%) of our home visit support focused on benefits.

We offer home visits for clients who are unable to access support outside their homes. The people we visit are among the most vulnerable clients we support. Referrals for home visits come from a range of agencies across Reading,

including voluntary organisations, Reading Borough Council, Adult Social Care, health care professionals, social services, social prescribers, and the Community Mental Health Team.

Case Study: We identified that an elderly client was entitled to both Pension Credit (PC) and Attendance Allowance (AA). We successfully supported the client in making both applications. The client is now receiving an **additional £608.82 per month** in benefits (£7,306 per year)

Email, Telephone & On-line Support

CommuniCare is primarily a face to face service, and we usually encourage clients to visit us or attend one of our outreach sessions. However, we have adapted to offer remote support via telephone, email, and an online enquiry form on our website. Our website also provides useful information and links that people can access as needed.

Where Clients Supported



Our Clients

We offer support to anyone who comes to us. Many of our clients, however, have complex lives and face significant barriers, such as English as a second language, low literacy levels, poor mental health, long-term health issues, digital exclusion, or homelessness. Poor health, particularly mental health, is an increasing issue among the clients we see. Supporting these clients requires time, patience, and understanding. We work closely with each client to understand their needs and the best way to help them. Building trust is essential: we start by listening and allowing clients to tell their story, which helps put them at ease and shows that we genuinely care. Once trust is established, meaningful support can begin, and many clients return multiple times for ongoing assistance.

In 2025 just over a third (35.8%) of clients had ongoing health conditions or disabilities.



We take a holistic approach, walking alongside our clients and helping them access the benefits and support they need. We work to build clients' confidence and empower them to make decisions, supporting them until they feel able to do so.

In 2025 nearly two-thirds (65%) of our clients were from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Giving clients time to talk demonstrates that we genuinely care about them and their situation. Many clients have shared that we were the first people to truly listen to their story, and simply being heard helps

ease their stress. We believe this emotional support is just as important as any practical assistance we provide.

Message from a Support Worker: "Thank you so much for being so approachable and warm. I was so impressed with your quickness to decipher what was going on. I knew that it would be beneficial to see someone who gets the housing jargon and could advocate calmly. My client struggles to trust people in authority, and they admitted to me afterwards that they had liked you. So again, thank you".

The Issues We Deal With

CommuniCare supports clients with a wide range of issues, from benefit claims to letter writing. Many clients come to us with two or more issues at once. By listening carefully and giving clients the time they need, our advisers often uncover additional challenges that clients may not have initially mentioned, allowing us to provide more comprehensive support.

The top 2 issues dealt with in 2025 were Benefits & Housing.

Benefit Support – our benefit work includes benefit checks, general advice, applications, mandatory reconsiderations, and appeals. In 2025, we submitted 873 benefit applications, logged 79 mandatory reconsiderations, and assisted

with 61 appeals. The top three benefits we supported clients with were Personal Independence Payment, Universal Credit, and Attendance Allowance.

In 2025 we assisted clients to claim the annual equivalent of £5,627,212 in benefits

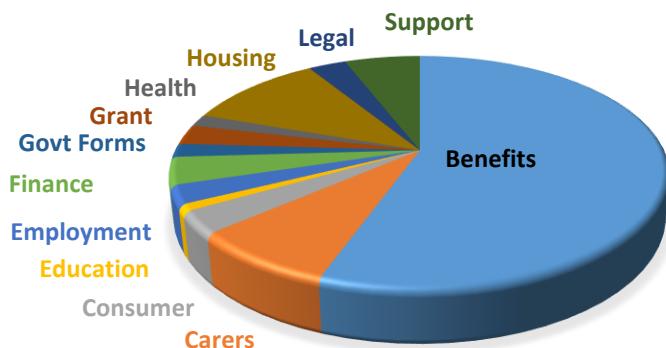
Housing Support – our housing advice covers many different areas. The top 3

In 2025 we completed 101 RBC Home Choice housing applications.

issues we dealt with in 2025 were applications for local authority housing, advice for those at risk of homelessness and general tenancy/landlord issues.

Case Study: Client had applied for PIP and was turned down. They decided not to appeal as they were incorrectly advised that they were not entitled as they received Carers Allowance. We supported the client to reapply for PIP. The application was successful and they now receive **£446.78 per month** in PIP payments (£5,362 per year).

CLIENT ISSUES 2025





Partnership Working

CommuniCare has always worked closely with both voluntary and statutory organisations across Reading. We strongly believe that partnership working is the key to giving people in Reading the support they need. We actively participate in numerous focus groups, steering groups and co-production meetings with Reading Borough Council and other voluntary sector organisations.

 **Reading Borough Council** CommuniCare works with a number of other Voluntary Sector Organisations in Reading to deliver services for Reading Borough Council. These partnerships have been in place since 2022 and ran until October 2025. Some services have been recommissioned for 2026 and beyond.



Reading & West Berkshire Carers Partnership. In partnership with Age UK Berkshire, Age UK Reading and Reading Mencap, we supported unpaid carers in Reading & West Berkshire. We supported the 2 local borough councils by completing Carers Assessments, giving information and advice and running support groups for the many unpaid carers in the area and working to have unpaid carers voices heard. *(This service has been recommissioned and we will continue to deliver this with our partners).*

Tackling Poverty Partnership. In partnership with CCA, CiRDiC, Mustard Tree, Reading Welfare Rights, Readifood and Reading Community Learning Centre, we worked together to support people in Reading to get out and stay out of poverty.

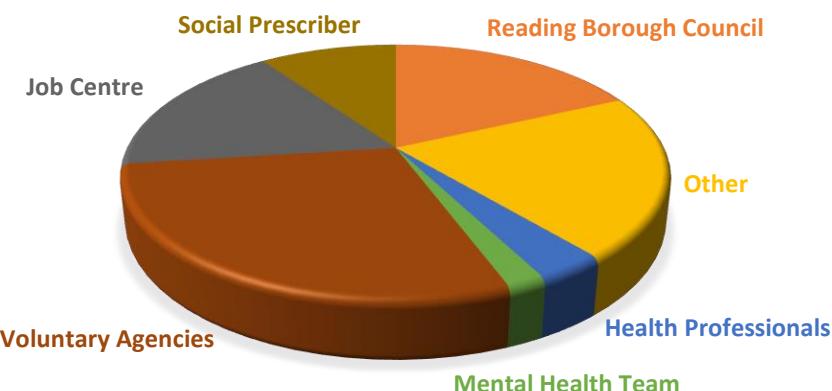


WELLBEING Partnership **Wellbeing Partnership.** In partnership with Age UK Berkshire, Age UK Reading, Engage Befriending and Sports in Mind we are working to build resilience independence and wellbeing and connect people to support and focus on individual and community strengths. *(A similar service has been recommissioned and we will deliver the new service with our partners).*

As well as the formal partnerships we have in place, we work closely with many other organisations across Reading. Many of the clients we support have been referred or signposted to us from other agencies in Reading.

In 2025, nearly half of all referrals came through partnership routes, with 29% from other voluntary sector organisations in Reading and 18% from Reading Borough Council.

REFERRALS INTO COMMUNICARE FROM



Pro Bono Legal Clinic

SHOOSMITHS

The Legal clinic is run with Shoosmiths Solicitors and law students from Reading University Law School. The client initially meets with a CommuniCare adviser so their situation can be assessed. If their case is appropriate, the client is referred to the Legal Clinic. The solicitor will work with their allocated law student to review the case. They will prepare the advice for the client and use the most appropriate method to communicate with the client, this can be by email, telephone, on-line meeting or face to face.

In 2025 we supported 6 clients with in-depth specialised legal advice.

CommuniCare Client Feedback during 2025

"I just wanted to send you a personal thank you regarding you completing my Mum's Attendance Allowance form. Today she received notification that her application has been approved and at the higher rate. We absolutely couldn't have done this without your knowledge and tenacity, and so I wanted to say a very BIG thank you. You have most certainly brightened up my Mum's day and absolutely made mine. Thank you so much".

"MASSIVE THANK YOU TO ALL. You do an amazing job. Special thanks to (the adviser) who helped so much".

"Thank you so much. Everyone is super friendly, helpful and lovely!"

"I am writing this letter to express my appreciation for helping me when I was in need of a washing machine. Through your support I have received a washing machine which I am now using at home. I am so happy for this and thank you very much, really appreciated".

"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 to me. I would have been so lost had it not been for your service. Thank you"

"I just wanted to send this card to say Thank You. You are always so kind and you have helped me with so much. I do not know what I would do without you. Please enjoy the chocolates."

"I wish to thank your organisation for sending (an adviser) to visit my wife yesterday to complete her lengthy and complicated application for Attendance Allowance. Your adviser was most pleasant and helpful".

"I have never claimed anything before and had no idea what to do. A friend recommend I come to you. You were all so kind and made me feel at ease. Thank you so much for taking the time to explain everything to me and help me to claim the benefits I needed. You made me feel less stressed"

"Thank you for helping me with my PIP. I was ready to give up but you were so kind and helped me to appeal. I can't believe I have now got it. The money will make such a big difference. Thank you so much, you are all wonderful"



Financial Details for the Financial Year Ending March 2025

INCOME

Donations & Grants	£133,200
Investments	£3,852
Other	£697
	£137,689

EXPENDITURE

CommuniCare Salaries (& pensions)	£143,610
Other Charitable Activities	£14,182
	£157,792

TOTAL SURPLUS **-£20,103**

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



Individual
Donors

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



Localgiving.com/CommuniCareRDG



CommuniCare Quality Marks & Accreditations:



Contact Us:



www.communicare.org.uk



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