

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

England & Wales · Charity number 1123017

Details

Status Registered

Legal form Charitable company

Company number [06442616](#)

Registered 2008-02-29

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address 94 London Street
Reading
RG1 4SJ

Phone 01189599009

Email aishamalik@rclc.org.uk

Website www.rclc.org.uk

Activities

Objects: FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC IN THE READING:1) THE RELIEF OF POVERTY AND THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO ARE SOCIALLY OR ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED, IN PARTICULAR WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THOSE FROM MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, IN PARTICULAR BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY BY:A) PROVIDING GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, INCLUDING LANGUAGE SKILLS AND OTHER BASIC SKILLS, TO ADVANCE THEM IN LIFE AND/OR ASSIST THEM TO ADAPT WITHIN A NEW COMMUNITY; ANDB) PROVIDING OR ASSISTING IN THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES IN THE INTERESTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE FOR RECREATION OR OTHER LEISURE TIME OCCUPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE NEED OF SUCH FACILITIES BY REASON OF THEIR YOUTH, AGE, FINANCIAL HARDSHIP OR SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES WITH THE OBJECTS OF IMPROVING THEIR CONDITIONS OF LIFE AND RELIEVING THE EFFECTS OF ISOLATION.2) TO PROMOTE RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY AND RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT, AND TO PROMOTE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN, PERSONS OF DIFFERENT RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS.3) TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC ABOUT ISSUES RELATING TO MIGRANTS, THOSE SEEKING ASYLUM AND/OR GRANTED REFUGEE STATUS TO HELP PROMOTE KNOWLEDGE, MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND MUTUAL AND GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM.4) TO RELIEVE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP AMONG PEOPLE LIVING OR WORKING IN THE READING AREA BY PROVIDING INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT.

Activities: Reading Community Learning Centre offers classes, support and other opportunities for educationally disadvantaged and socially isolated women from Reading's diverse minority ethnic communities. Our emphasis is on finding ways into learning for even the most tentative and least confident of learners. RCLC also provides development opportunities for under-5s through an onsite creche.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Economic/community Development/employment
- **Who:** Children/young People, People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin, Other Defined Groups

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** NOT DEFINED. IN PRACTICE, READING, WOKINGHAM AND WEST BERKSHIRE
- Reading
- West Berkshire
- Wokingham

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£244,175	£236,999	-	-
2024-03-31	£197,609	£225,107	-	-
2023-03-31	£150,949	£208,081	-	-
2022-03-31	£152,519	£175,142	-	-
2021-03-31	£199,877	£143,096	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
SARAH DEL TUFO	Chair	
Cecilia Garcia		2025-02-16
Jennifer Theron		2019-03-12
KAREN ROWLAND		2017-12-12
Lillian Rose Magero		2025-02-06
Lucy England		2017-12-12
Professor Clare Louise Furneaux		2020-06-12
Raya Mohamed Said		2018-01-30
Rengui Sally Jiang		2024-07-16
Rosie Chambers		2019-09-23
Shaheen Kausar		2025-03-19
Simran Aul		2020-11-24
Soha Kamaran		2024-09-19

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

England & Wales - Charity number 1123017

Accounts

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2025
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

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1. CHARITY INFORMATION

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities', effective 1 January 2019.

The Trustees have complied with the duty in section 17(5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance.

Reference and administrative details

Registered Company number
06442616 (England and Wales)

Registered Charity number
1123017

Registered office
94 London Street
Reading RG1 4SJ

Trustees

Clare Furneaux
Jennifer Theron
Karen Rowland
Katharine Sarah del Tufo - stepped down as Chair 3/3/25 but remains a trustee and is currently Acting Chair
Lucy England
Raya Mohamed
Rosie Chambers
Simran Aul
Aydan Gasimova - 9/5/2024 resigned
Parveen Brar - staff representative to the Board (ex officio) - 29/5/24 resigned
Crystal Magotra - 15/4/24 appointed
Donna Ma – 11/6/24 appointed as staff rep to the board (ex officio)
Komal Komal – 11/7/24 appointed. Resigned 18/9/25
Rajalakshmi Vengatesan – 15/7/24 appointed. Resigned 11/9/25
Sally Rengui Jiang - 16/7/24 appointed
Soha Kamaran – 19/9/24 appointed
Jennifer Akua Ossei-Brainoo – 4/2/25 appointed. Resigned 24/9/25
Lillian Rose Magero – 6/2/25 appointed
Cecilia Garcia – 16/2/25 appointed
Fatima Habib – 3/3/25 appointed as Chair and trustee. Resigned 24/10/25
Shaheen Kausar – 19/3/25 appointed

Company Secretary

Aisha Malik (CEO)

Independent Examiner

Holy Brook Associates

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The charity is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 3 December 2007 and registered as a charity on 29 February 2008. It is governed by its Articles of Association.

The directors of the company are also the charity trustees. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction and policies of the charity. Day-to-day management is delegated to the CEO.

New trustees are recruited through an induction process involving meetings with the Chair and CEO, provision of information packs, and observation of Board meetings. The Board meets approximately every two months and from summer 2025 a fundraising subcommittee meets periodically to specifically discuss funding considerations.

The trustees have a risk management process which involves identifying and reviewing the risks faced by the charity. A risk register is maintained and reviewed regularly.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors, who also serve as charity trustees, provides strategic governance and brings a diverse range of skills in finance, HR and management. Meetings are held approximately every two months, with a mix of virtual and in-person sessions in 2024/25. The Board's work is supported by sub-groups focused on HR, learner engagement and fundraising, while operational management is delegated to the CEO.

In 2025, RCLC welcomed Fatima Habib as its new Chair. With over 30 years of cross-sector experience in governance and social justice, she is a passionate advocate for marginalised communities. Sadly, Fatima resigned as Chair and trustee on 24/10/25 but will continue to stay in touch with RCLC as a friend of the charity. The RCLC team and Board of Trustees, would like to express their heartfelt thanks to Fatima Habib for her dedication and leadership during her time as Chair. Though Fatima's resignation comes with sadness, RCLC would like to extend good health and wellbeing wishes to Fatima.

The organisation also extends its deepest gratitude to founding Chair Katharine Sarah Del Tufo, whose vision, dedication and compassion have been instrumental in shaping the charity's vital role in the Reading community, since its inception in 2007. Sarah stepped down as Chair in Dec 2024, after years of extraordinary service. RCLC would not be what it is today without her unwavering belief in the power of community, dignity, and hope. Sarah Del Tufo is currently the acting Chair until we can recruit a new Chair in 2026.

Members

Reading Community Learning Centre is a membership organisation. There are currently 65 members, mainly longstanding supporters of the work of the Centre. Reading Community Learning Centre's Board is accountable to its members for the operation of the organisation in line with its stated objectives. Members receive a report on the Centre's work and progress at least annually, and they are eligible to vote at general meetings of the organisation.

Risk management

The Directors have a responsibility to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to manage the finances effectively and guard against fraud. A number of measures and protocols have been established which aim to safeguard the finances of the Centre and to provide satisfactory systems in all areas of work which expose the charity to risk. The Board of Directors has continued to take a conservative approach to financial decisions during this year of the charity's life and has aimed to establish an appropriate reserve of funds as advised by the Charity Commission.

Since early March 2020, we have maintained a dedicated COVID-19 risk register and protocols, originally developed in response to the pandemic. While these measures are no longer actively required, we keep them in place as a precaution in case of future outbreaks. We continue to follow general health and safety practices, including the use of hand sanitiser and maintaining a clean environment. A full risk register is maintained, and any safeguarding concerns are reviewed at Board Meetings. All staff are regularly reminded of the operational risks and complete annual Safeguarding and Prevent Training.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Centre's objectives are, for the benefit of the public in the Reading area:

1. The relief of poverty and the needs of those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, in particular women and children and those from minority ethnic communities. This is done, for example, by:
 - a. providing general education and training, including language skills and other basic skills, to advance them in life and/or assist them to adapt within a new community; and
 - b. providing or assisting them in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, financial hardship or social circumstances with the objects of improving their conditions of life and relieving the effects of isolation.
2. To promote racial and religious harmony and raise awareness about, and to promote good relations between, persons of different racial and religious groups.
3. To advance the education of the public about issues relating to migrants, those seeking asylum and/or granted refugee status to help promote knowledge, mutual understanding and mutual and good relations between them.
4. To relieve financial hardship among people living or working in the Reading area by providing information, advice and support.

The Board has referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

Vision

Marginalised ethnic minority women in Reading achieving their individual hopes and fulfilling their aspirations.

Mission

Reading Community Learning Centre:

- offers marginalised ethnic minority women opportunities for social, educational, integration, and volunteering activities;
- provides services that address barriers to learning;
- supports progression into further education, social and employment opportunities; and
- encourages these women to raise their issues and concerns and engage with agencies.

Aims

Reading Community Learning Centre aims to enable marginalised ethnic minority women to be skilled, confident active citizens who contribute to society.

4. RCLC DELIVERY PROGRAMMES

In furtherance of its charitable objectives, during the year the charity supported 595 learners through its core programme of courses and provided 2,344 information, advice and guidance (IAG) sessions.

CORE PROGRAMMES RUN IN 2024/25

In the academic year 2024/25, 595 (an increase of 17% since last year) women completed our core programmes, which, for the first time since the pandemic, were all taught face to face at RCLC.

Autumn 2024

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners and Improvers
- Sewing Beginners, and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly ethnic minority women with long term health conditions)
- English for Everyday Maths
- Jelly Arts and RCLC All Roads Community Art Project
- Online Seated Yoga
- Wellbeing Course
- Afghan pre-entry conversation class

Spring 2025

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners and Improvers
- Sewing Beginners, and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly ethnic minority women with long term health conditions)
- Online Seated Yoga
- Wellbeing Course
- Afghan pre-entry conversation class

Summer 2025

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers
- English Reading and Writing Beginners
- Sewing Beginners, and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- Afghan pre-entry conversation class
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly ethnic minority women with long term health conditions)
- Online Seated Yoga
- Wellbeing Course
- Gardening Workshops at the Museum for English Rural Life (MERL)

LEARNER STATISTICS

595 learners enrolled on our core programme of courses at RCLC 2024/25

- 98% of our core programme learners have no UK qualifications or are at an entry level in ESOL.
- 14% of learners have a degree or higher from their home country.
- 91% of our learners are unemployed.
- 40% of our learners are on benefits (it is important to remember that 22% of our learners were asylum seekers and refugees who could not work and were ineligible to claim benefits due to their immigration status so in reality this percentage should be much higher).
- 17% of our learners are retired.
- 8% of our learners work part-time or full-time.
- 12% of our learners use the crèche, a lifeline for those who cannot afford childcare costs.
- 44% of our learners are aged 51 plus; 25% are aged 41-50; 21% are 31-40 and 10% are aged 19-30.
- 11% of our learners are refugees and 12% are asylum seekers (the asylum seeker figure is a reduction by 5% from last year, the refugee numbers are the same as last year), whilst 52% of the learners had not been living in the UK for more than 3 years (this is a decrease of 9% from last year).
- 22% of learners disclosed that they needed additional support. Of this 22%, 27% of the women declared they had physical disability affecting their mobility; 23% had other medical conditions; 22% had other medical disabilities; 9% were hearing impaired; whilst 9% had mental health difficulties. It must be noted that when new learners join RCLC they rarely complete this section due to stigma attached to certain health conditions.
- 2% of the learners progressed into full-time or part-time employment and 2% onto volunteering. These figures are the same as last year as the vast majority of our learners had no qualifications or experience of working in their home country, and more than half of our learners had not been living here for more than 3 years. It will therefore take them longer to progress onto volunteering or employment. This is also exacerbated by the fact that there are large sectors of the economy which were badly affected by the pandemic and the continued cost of living crisis is also making it harder for women to get into employment due to travel costs, low wages for the sectors they are seeking employment in and childcare costs.
- 72% of our learners progressed onto internal courses at RCLC.
- 12% of our learners progressed onto accredited courses with the WEA, Reading College or New Directions (last year 9% progressed onto external accredited courses) whilst 12% progressed onto other courses in the community.
- This year's learners came from an amazing 41 different countries with the majority from the following: 17% from Hong Kong, 14% from Afghanistan, 13% from India, 11% from Nepal, 11% from Pakistan, 5% from Ukraine, 3% from China, 2% from Sudan, 2% from Bangladesh and 2% from Kenya. Some of the other countries were- Turkey, Syria, Sri Lanka, Morocco, Libya, Japan, Eritrea, Albania, Algeria, Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Malaysia, Kuwait and Iran.
- Current learners speak 35 different languages with the majority speaking with the majority of learners speaking Urdu 13%, Nepali 11%, Cantonese 10%, Chinese 9%, Pashto 8%, Arabic 7%, Dari 6%, Hindi 5%, Punjabi 5%, Tamil 4% and Ukrainian 4%. Other languages include Yaruba, Turkish, Mandarin, Japanese, French, Bengali and Amharic.
- Our learners are mostly from the following wards; Katesgrove (16%), Abbey (14%), Battle (9%), Coley (9%), Park (8%), Redlands (8%) Whitley (6%), Tilehurst (5%), Church (4%), Caversham (4%), Southcote (3%), Emmer Green (2%), Maiden Erlegh (2%) and 2% from Hawkden.
- Data from the Indices of Deprivation 2019 showed the five most deprived areas in and around Reading are among the 10% most deprived areas nationally. These were located within Whitley; The Meadway in Tilehurst (RG30 4 postcodes); the Honey End Lane area of Tilehurst (RG30 3 postcodes); Norcot (RG30 1 - RG30 6 area) and the Northumberland Avenue area (RG27). This year 22% of our learners came from these specific areas.

Postcode-based indices of deprivation provide only a broad picture and mask the true scale of poverty experienced by ethnic minority communities. Because data is aggregated across entire postcodes, within-area inequalities are averaged out, meaning people in temporary accommodation, hotels, or refuges (where 23% of RCLC learners live) are invisible in the statistics. When combined with the 22% of learners in officially recognised deprived areas, 45% of RCLC learners are from disadvantaged backgrounds, far higher than postcode data alone suggests. National research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Equality Trust confirms that postcode-level measures obscure ethnic disparities, underestimating poverty levels and resulting in the loss of vital funding. This masking effect means resources are misallocated, and the lived realities of ethnic minority communities remain hidden unless deprivation is measured using more granular, demographic-specific data.

Refugee and asylum seeker figures

The statistics below give a breakdown of the number of refugees and asylum seekers who studies on the core programmes at RCLC and which country they came from over the academic year 2024/25.

Refugee country of origin	Total number in 2024/25
Afghanistan	30
Ukraine	22
Eritrea	5
Pakistan	4
Albania	2
Burma	1
China	1
Ivory Coast	1
Nigeria	1
Turkey	1
Total	68

Asylum seekers country of origin	Total number in 2024/25
Afghanistan	19
Pakistan	9
Sudan	8
Nigeria	4
Bangladesh	4
China	3
India	3
Malaysia	3
Eritrea	2
Iran	2
Kuwait	2
Columbia	1
Congo	1
Hong Kong	1
Molokai	1
Palestine	1
Syria	1
Ukraine	1
Total	66

Learner Progression

- An incredible 100% of all our learners progressed on to either internal courses at RCLC, jobs, volunteering or external courses both accredited and non-accredited in the academic year 2024/25. This figure highlights the importance of the Centre as an important steppingstone in the journey for our learners to be able to aspire and grow their skills, confidence and become active participants of the community in which they live.
- 4% of the learners progressed into employment or volunteering. This figure is 1% lower than last year (5% for 2023/24), which is primarily due to the fact that 98% of our learners in 2024/25 had no qualifications and were at an Entry ESOL level.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Improving citizen engagement – learners engaging with agencies about issues that affect their lives

Guest speakers are invited to the Centre so that women have the opportunity to engage and access important information in a safe and private environment. The guest speakers are broadly categorised into terms which are themed on women's health, accessing local services, or are linked to women's rights and safety. This year we ran the following sessions and trips over the three terms as part of our enrichment activities for learners at the Centre:

Autumn 2024

- 25 women attended the Chai and Chat session to learn about domestic abuse support.
- 15 learners joined a tea and culture workshop at the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) with Dadima's Walks.
- 113 learners received information from outreach workers about uniforms, food, furniture, and benefit support.
- 60 women accessed mental health support information from Together Outreach.
- 13 women received free NHS health checks at the Centre.
- 25 women visited Reading Central Library as part of their enrichment activity.
- 7 women took part in the All Roads Community Art Project sharing crafts and migration stories.
- 30 women attended careers advice presentations from Adviza.
- 50 women joined the end of term celebration recognising achievements with shared food.

Spring 2024

- 158 learners received information from outreach workers on food, clothing, and household support charities.
- 12 women attended the Chai and Chat session.
- 50 women accessed advice information from CommuniCare, with 20 women receiving 1:1 sessions.
- 19 women attended a presentation from SmartWorks about interview and coaching support.
- 18 women joined the MERL and Dadima's Walks tea workshop.
- 25 women visited MERL for an ESOL enrichment activity.
- 17 women received free NHS health checks.
- 66 women took part in the spring term celebration with shared food.
- 13 women from ESOL Skills for Health visited Reading Urgent Care Centre for information.

Summer 2024

- 23 women attended the Chai and Chat jewellery and wellbeing workshop.
- 48 women accessed CommuniCare advice support, with 20 receiving 1:1 sessions.
- 157 learners received outreach information on food, clothing, and furniture support.
- 9 women joined a 5-week Chai and Chat Gardening course at MERL.
- 6 women received free NHS health checks.

- 17 women participated in a focus group on BAMER maternity experiences.
- 50 women attended Women's Wellbeing Day, which included yoga, massages, and 11 health checks.
- 18 women received a volunteering presentation from Reading Voluntary Action.
- 53 women accessed mental health service information from Together Outreach.
- 15 women visited Reading Museum for enrichment.
- 37 women received progression advice from New Directions College on interpreting and volunteering.
- 15 women attended New Directions College Open Day with their class.
- 90 learners celebrated at the summer picnic with certificates at MERL.

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Following initial interviews to identify learning needs, the Centre records achievement, recruitment and retention to check that quality learning is taking place, and that it has met the learners' needs. Progression opportunities are discussed termly by tutors and information advice and guidance advisors.

As part of the quality assurance procedures, regular teaching observations are undertaken which monitor methods of delivery, assessment, management of diversity, and equal opportunities, e-learning contributions and learners' comments. All tutors and crèche staff are qualified and supervised. Observations for the academic year 2024/25 were undertaken in February, May and June 2025 by the Manager.

In addition to the observations undertaken by the CEO, New Directions observed a sample teaching session from the ESOL for Everyday Maths class which they funded. Each tutor also completes a course evaluation after every session.

LEARNER FEEDBACK AND OUTCOMES – THE DIFFERENCE OUR WORK MAKES

RCLC Learner Evaluation Forms Feedback

At the end of each course every learner completes a learner evaluation form. The statistics below outline the learners' feedback from their classes over the academic year 2024/25:

- 84% of learners felt their learning experience had been excellent whilst 16% said it was good.
- 76% said that the course level and content was excellent whilst the remaining 22% said it was good.
- 82% said that the way the course was taught was excellent whilst 17% said it was good.
- 83% said that the information and support which they received was excellent whilst 16% said it was good.
- 99% said that they felt they had improved their confidence and language skills.
- 98% felt that their health had improved since coming to the classes.
- 100% said that they would like to do more courses, volunteering or get a job after finishing their classes at RCLC.
- 97% said that they had made new friends since coming to the Centre.
- 97% said that they now knew who to go to, to ask for help and support.
- 99% said that they felt happier since coming to the Centre to learn.
- 99% said that they had learnt new skills.
- 98% said they felt they were now more confident to go out and do other activities since joining the classes.
- 98% said that they felt more independent in their everyday lives.

RCLC Learner Interview 2025 summary

RCLC Learner Feedback 2025

These interviews covering the 13 core classes were completed at the end of the summer term by volunteers and staff, interviewing in 5 languages. The interviews represent around 27% of the learners that term, and 9.6% of the learners for the year. The findings mainly reflect those of previous years.

Reasons for coming to UK and feelings about Reading

Some families were economic migrants, who were coming for improved living conditions, for better education for children, and/or to join husbands or families. However, many learners had escaped from extremely dangerous countries such as Afghanistan. Whilst some learners were new to the UK, coming as refugees or asylum seekers or on spouse visas, some learners had lived here for a long time but had not been able to learn English, mainly because of multi-generational family caring responsibilities, or lack of knowledge of the Centre's existence. Almost all those interviewed liked living in Reading, mentioning how central and close everything was, with some identifying the good schools and transport. Many, especially those granted asylum, mentioned the

high cost of housing. A number mentioned that people are kind and helpful and its multicultural nature is valued.

Why Learners Join the Centre

The main reason for attending RCLC is to learn English. Without language, everyday tasks such as shopping, buses, school meetings, or GP visits felt overwhelming. Many women described relying on family for translation, which created dependency and frustration. For others, joining was about regaining confidence, meeting people, or preparing for volunteering or work. Often, family members, support workers, or friends encouraged them to come, highlighting RCLC's reputation as a trusted community space. Most women arrive at the Centre with very little English language, even if they had worked in their countries of origin, or lived in UK for years, and sought an opportunity to learn. As girls, some of the women had never gone to school in their countries of origin and others had completed Primary School studies. Most faced isolation, stress, boredom and loneliness and others specifically mentioned mental health issues.

Experience at RCLC

Learners consistently describe RCLC as welcoming and safe for women. The atmosphere is friendly, inclusive, and supportive. Tutors, often mentioned by name, are praised for patience and kindness, sometimes even described as "like sisters." For women facing health issues, resettlement stress, or past trauma, this safe environment is vital. Classes are highly valued. English courses form the backbone, but learners also appreciate the variety: wellbeing, sewing, and IT. These classes don't just build skills, they also offer relaxation, routine, and the chance to share learning with family. There was universal praise for the quality and style of the teaching, and the friendliness, kindness and supportiveness of other learners, tutors and volunteers. A number of learners really valued the diversity of learners from many countries. The free courses are really important to many learners. The creche is really valued.

Although satisfaction is high, learners suggested a few improvements, especially frequent or longer classes, especially in IT and English.

Most learners first found out about the Centre through a friend who introduced them to the outreach/ support workers, or the administrator, though some were referred by other agencies, like Job Centre Plus or the RVA Social Prescribers. Sometimes family members went online and found out what was available. After visiting the Centre and their needs being assessed, learners had often to wait to get on language courses. The choice of classes was often not what was originally requested as that class (mainly English language or sewing) was full. They were helped to choose an alternative and their names put down for next or the following terms class.

Impact on Learners 'Lives

The difference RCLC makes is striking.

- **Language Development:** Learners feel more able to manage daily life—whether asking for directions, visiting doctors, or communicating with schools. Even small progress brings pride and independence.
- **Confidence and Independence:** Many describe a shift from fear and isolation to courage, resilience and self-reliance. Women who once stayed indoors now travel alone, speak up at school meetings, or attend community events.
- **Social and Emotional Wellbeing:** Attending classes reduces loneliness and homesickness. Long-term friendships across different cultures form quickly, and the Centre provides structure and purpose. Learners often describe feeling "happier" and "less scared" and more connected by building stronger social networks and improved wellbeing and mental health, feel able to ask for help if needed
- **Practical Benefits:** Beyond learning, RCLC helps with accessing health and other services, benefits, and paperwork. This support makes UK systems less intimidating.
- **Family Benefits:** Women can now read to children, help with homework, or engage more fully in family life, changes they see as empowering. Overall, the Centre's impact is holistic: skills, wellbeing, and social belonging all improve.

Key Themes Several clear patterns run through the feedback:

- Language is a gateway to independence, confidence, and integration.
- Community and belonging are just as important as formal learning and support its development

- Holistic support matters: learners appreciate both educational and practical help.
- Staff are central; teachers and staff are consistently praised for their skills and kindness.
- Transformation is real; learners describe moving from dependency and isolation to confidence, connection, and hope.

Overall Reflections

RCLC (Reading Community Learning Centre) is valued far beyond its classes. For learners, particularly refugee women, it provides language skills, confidence, friendship, and a safe place to belong. The Centre helps women navigate daily life in the UK, overcome isolation, and build hope for the future. The journey learners describe is powerful. Before RCLC, many felt stuck, isolated at home, unable to communicate, and dependent on others. Through classes, encouragement, and community, they gain the language, confidence, and friendships that make independent life possible. RCLC acts as a bridge: into the local community, into independence, and sometimes toward employment or volunteering. Above all, learners see RCLC as a place of kindness, safety, and opportunity. Their strongest wish is simple: that the Centre continues, expands, and remains accessible to all who need it.

6. REMOVING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)

To achieve its strategic objective of removing barriers to learning, RCLC provides essential, hands-on support that addresses the complex challenges faced by its learners, many of whom are refugees, asylum seekers, or survivors of trauma who experience isolation and are daunted by navigating a new society. This critical work, intensified by the Cost-of-Living Crisis, goes beyond simple referrals and includes translating, form filling, making appointments, and acting as an advocate to help women access vital services such as benefits, housing, food parcels, and healthcare. Furthermore, RCLC offers direct mental health support through its referral partners, operates a weekly benefits surgery in partnership with CommuniCare, and provides signposting to specialist services, all of which are crucial for breaking down isolation, building confidence, and enabling women and their families to integrate into the community and begin their learning journey.

Over the academic year 2024/25 RCLC has referred learners and non- learners to the following organisations:

- 80 women to CommuniCare
- 28 women to RCLC
- 16 women to New Directions College
- 14 women to Museum of English Rural Life
- 10 women to NHS Health Check Service
- 10 women to The Cowshed
- 8 women to Together Outreach
- 7 women to Refugee Support Group (RSG)
- 6 women to Project Salama
- 5 women to SmartWorks
- 4 women to Adviza
- 4 women to Job Centre Plus
- 3 women to Readifood
- 3 women to Reading Borough Council
- 3 women to Mustard Tree
- 2 women to Berkshire Women's Aid
- 2 women to the GP
- 2 women to Launchpad
- 2 women to Talking Therapies
- 2 women to Utulivu
- 2 women to Wycliffe Church
- 1 woman to Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE)
- 1 woman to Citizen Advice Reading (CAR)
- 1 woman to CRUSE Bereavement
- 1 woman to RVA Social Prescribing
- 1 woman to RBC Social Services

The largest number of referrals were made to CommuniCare (37%) highlighting the extra support women need in accessing benefits and housing advice due to their language barrier.

A total of 2,344 information, advice and guidance sessions for women were carried out at the Centre over the academic year 2024/25, this is a huge increase of 65% primarily due to the fact that we had an extra outreach worker in addition to an extra outreach volunteer to deliver support to meet an increase in demand. Out of these women 28% of these were not current or previous RCLC learners and had been referred to us from friends, neighbours or other organisations and our partners.

New learners mostly come to the centre through word of mouth from a friend, relative, previous learner, a relative or through RCLC outreach work. Refugee Support Group has been our largest referrer this year referring 89 women over the academic year 2024/25 to RCLC (this is an increase of 31% from last year). Other referrals to RCLC over the academic year are listed below:

- 89 women were referred by Refugee Support Group (RSG)
- 83 women were referred by RVA Social Prescribers
- 40 women were referred by Job Centre Plus
- 67 women were referred by the Pakistani Community Centre (PCC)
- 39 women were referred by RBC Adult Care and Social Services
- 21 women were referred by Care 4 Calais
- 10 women were referred by Berkshire Women's Aid
- 9 women were referred by CommuniCare
- 7 women were referred by WEA
- 7 women were referred by New Directions College
- 4 women were referred by Ground Work
- 4 women were referred by Citizen Advice Reading (CAR)
- 3 women were referred by Reading Borough Council
- 2 women were referred by local schools
- 1 woman was referred by the DWP
- 1 woman referred herself from the website

Crèche

The Centre provides a vital crèche service for children aged 4 months to 4 years, many of whom are refugees, asylum seekers, or have had limited social interaction. Staffed by a trained and caring team, the crèche focuses on developing English language skills, social confidence, and school readiness through educational play, while also offering informal parenting support. In the 2024/25 academic year, 83 children benefited from this service.

Parent evaluations of the crèche were overwhelmingly positive. All parents (100%) reported that their children were happy, had learned new things, and were safe in the crèche's care. Furthermore, 100% of parents rated the service as either excellent (56%) or good (44%), and all felt well-informed about their child's development, with 70% rating the communication as excellent and 30% as good.

7. MAINTENANCE OF THE CENTRE

The Centre is maintained to a high standard to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment. This includes regular updates to IT equipment and security software, alongside essential annual safety checks for fire alarms, electrical systems, emergency lighting, and heating. All staff, volunteers, and learners receive thorough inductions covering health and safety, safeguarding, and emergency procedures at the start of each term.

To accommodate record-high learner numbers, internal space has been reconfigured. The vacated top floor is now used for additional classes and has been repurposed to house staff outreach offices and dedicated space for partner organisations, CommuniCare and Together Outreach, to hold their weekly support surgeries. The accessible ground floor room is now available for hire to New Directions College.

Finally, the trustees would like to extend their sincere gratitude to our landlord for their supportive and collaborative approach. Their agreement to a temporary rent holiday and a reduced rate of £9,000 per quarter for the coming year provides essential financial stability and is deeply appreciated as the charity navigates rising costs and increasing demand for its services.

Egnyte and RCLC

In Summer 2025, the incredible staff of Egnyte gave up their time and energy on one of the hottest days of the year in August, to paint our classrooms on the 1st floor. The enthusiastic, strong team of 7 led by Ali (Senior Workplace Experience Manager), rolled up their sleeves and freshened up the centre to make it bright and welcoming. Their enthusiasm and commitment to giving back to the community have truly made a difference and has enabled the charity to use the funding which they would have spent on labour and materials on providing free classes for migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women. RCLC would like to say a big thank you to everyone who participated in this wonderful initiative and to Connect Reading for introducing us to Egnyte.

8. STAFFING

The charity employs a dedicated team to deliver its charitable objectives. During the year, the staffing structure evolved to enhance operational resilience and strategic development.

A long-serving outreach worker, Shaheen Kausar, retired after 15 years of dedicated service and subsequently rejoined the organisation as both a volunteer and a Trustee, bringing valuable experience to the Board. To meet increasing demand, two new part-time outreach workers were appointed in January 2025, one of which was funded by a National Lottery grant.

The teaching team consists of seven sessional tutors delivering a range of courses, including ESOL, sewing, IT and wellbeing. The crèche is staffed by three workers, ensuring vital childcare support for learners.

A significant development was the approval from the National Lottery to repurpose funding from a Business Development Manager role to a new Centre Manager post. This key appointment, currently underway, is a strategic priority to strengthen leadership, mitigate key person risk and provide essential succession planning. This will allow the CEO to focus on income diversification, partnership development and long-term strategy, thereby improving the charity's financial resilience.

Volunteers

Volunteers are central to the success of our work, providing vital support and enabling us to extend our services. In the 2024/25 academic year, we were supported by 19 volunteers who undertook a variety of roles, including 5 classroom assistants, 3 admin/reception helpers, 5 translators, and 1 outreach volunteer. This dedicated group included both long-standing supporters, like retired teacher Rita Parr who returned after a brief hiatus, and new members such as three University of Reading students who provided invaluable translation and administrative support.

The contribution of our volunteers is deeply appreciated. Their dedication and hard work have a significant impact, greatly enriching our community and directly helping RCLC achieve its goals. Their willingness to contribute their time and skills is invaluable to our organisation.

9. FINANCIAL REVIEW

We have reported a small surplus of £7,000 for 2024/25; this is an improvement on our 2023/24 deficit, which was £27,000. In 2024/25, we received significant funds from National Lottery (£102,000, which included a 10% variance on our original grant amount) and Reading Borough Council (£71,000 across multiple contracts), while maintaining tight control over our expenditure.

Income for 2024/25 was £244,000, which is significantly higher than the £198,000 raised in 2023/24. We have seen income increase for a number of years now. However, it has been necessary to raise more funds each year as demand for our services has increased significantly in recent years. We are always looking for new ways to raise funds and diversify our income.

Having come to the end of our National Lottery funding, and with our Closing the Gap contracts with Reading Borough Council ending in October 2025, we have been working hard on applying for new sources of funding. While the fundraising environment remains extremely challenging and competitive, we are pleased to report recent successes in securing a grant from Postcode Lottery and winning two new Closing the Gap 2 contracts with Reading Borough Council, which will provide us with valuable regular income from autumn 2025. In addition to this, we expect to soon welcome a new Centre Manager, who will free up our CEO's time, allowing her to focus on strategic matters, including fundraising. The Treasurer and Fundraising Subcommittee also provide fundraising support.

While we are working hard to bring in income, we endeavour to keep our costs as low as we reasonably can. Despite this, we saw costs increase to £237,000 in 2024/25, compared with £225,000 in 2023/24. Most significantly, staff pay has increased due to pay increases being awarded where appropriate, e.g. in line with National Living Wage levels and to ensure the pay we offer is fair and competitive. The rent for our town centre premises is high, but the learners need to be able to reach the Centre using one bus or walking, as many of them need to pick up their children from school after classes. We continue look for shared, less expensive premises.

Income and expenditure figures are monitored monthly against the annual budget and reviewed by the Board at each meeting. We produce detailed cash flow forecasts every month, as we are aware of the importance of closely monitoring our financial position. When contracts are due for review, every effort is made to ensure services are purchased from the most cost-effective source.

Reading Borough Council – Closing the Gap

From November 2022, we have undertaken two streams of contract work for Reading Borough Council under the Closing the Gap initiative. This has themes of supporting people to get out and stay out of poverty; build resilience, independence and wellbeing; connect people to support; and focus on individual and community strengths. This funding will run until the end of October 2025.

We are pleased to have secured new work under Closing the Gap 2 from November 2025, which will run for at least three years. This money will continue to provide a valuable base, as it makes a substantial contribution towards our costs.

National Lottery

Funding from National Lottery started in December 2022 and was to continue for two years, although we have agreed an extension for some of this funding. The funding contributed towards the costs of the Centre's rent, utilities and existing staff. In addition to this, the funds originally provided for an additional part time Community Outreach Worker, a part time Business Development Manager and a Strategic Consultant.

Due to challenges experienced in recruiting a suitable Business Development Manager, we agreed with Lottery that we would repurpose the funds for this position and the Strategic Consultant. We will instead use this funding for the new Centre Manager position. We expect these funds to last into 2026.

Other Income

The Centre received other income in the form of room hires and regular donations. We also continue to charge learners a small enrolment fee for each course and for the use of places in the crèche.

Other sources of income received during 2024/25 included:

- Reading Borough Council Household Support Fund – towards Pre-Entry English and Beginners IT classes
- Reading Borough Council – funds towards specific classes for Afghan women
- Reading Borough Council Small Grants – towards creche worker salaries
- Reading University Community Engagement Fund – towards Beginners IT classes
- Reading University – CareWell Research Project
- ICB Funded Community Wellness Outreach Project in Partnership with RVA and MEET PEET (Community Health Checks) towards health checks and related outreach work
- Berkshire Community Foundation – towards rent, tutor pay and creche worker pay
- The Multiply Project (funded by Reading Borough Council and New Directions) – funds for Everyday Maths courses
- Berkshire Nurses and Relief in Sickness Trust (BNRST) – towards Wellbeing classes
- Anton Jurgens – towards Beginners English Conversation classes
- Garfield Weston, Gerald Palmer Eling Trust, Cumber Family Trust, Shanly Foundation, Marsh Charitable Trust and Rotary Club (Santa Fun Run) – unrestricted funds
- Rental income from New Directions College

As in previous years, other funding applications were made but were unsuccessful.

Reserves Policy

The Board has examined the Charity Commission's requirements for reserves in the light of the main risks to the organisation. Originally, the Board had established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible assets would be held to cover three months' running costs, which with the current rent and salary levels now requires an amount of £59,000 to be held. We have been able to reach this level in the General Reserve.

Funds were previously also held in designated reserves. However, this has been reviewed given our current proportion of restricted funds. At 31 March 2024, the majority of funds held were unrestricted, meaning that it felt prudent to hold designated reserves for premises and staffing. At 31 March 2025, however, the majority of our funds held were restricted and many of these are for premises and staffing costs. As a result, we no longer hold designated reserves at 31 March 2025.

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2025
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the Board of Trustees, as the company directors on 11/11/25 and signed on the Board's behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah Del Tufo'.

Katharine Sarah Del Tufo (Acting Chair of the Board of Trustees)



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Report to the trustees/ members of	Reading Community Learning Centre		
On accounts for the year ended	31 st March 2025	Charity no	1123017
Set out on pages	1-2		

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,;

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

12/11/25

Name:

Rachel Eden

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

FCMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants)

Address:

Holy Brook Associates, Curious Lounge, 1st Floor, Pinnacle Building,

Tudor Road, Reading, England,

RG1 1NH

NONE

Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2025
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Statement of Financial Activities
(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 March 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM					
Charitable activities	2				
Grants – Core programme		15,000	206,445	221,445	180,236
Courses		4,905	-	4,905	4,010
Total charitable activities		19,905	206,445	226,350	184,246
Donations and legacies		6,299	-	6,299	5,652
Other income	3	11,525	-	11,525	7,711
Total income		37,729	206,445	244,175	197,609
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Building costs		29,914	45,218	75,132	68,427
Office costs		5,242	1,239	6,481	6,999
Programme costs		16,911	32,070	48,981	54,202
Staffing		14,052	91,849	105,901	94,976
Independent examination		504	-	504	504
Total expenditure		66,622	170,376	236,999	225,107
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(28,893)	36,069	7,176	(27,498)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		96,297	45,971	142,268	169,767
Movements between restricted and unrestricted funds		2,545	(2,545)	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		69,949	79,496	149,444	142,268

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	8	4,292	-	4,292	3,871
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	3,394	13,233	16,628	11,799
Cash at bank		72,478	75,725	148,203	174,419
Total current assets		75,873	88,958	164,831	186,218
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	10	(10,217)	(9,463)	(19,680)	(47,823)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		65,655	79,495	145,151	138,396
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		69,948	79,495	149,443	142,267
NET ASSETS		69,948	79,495	149,443	142,267
FUNDS	12				
Unrestricted funds				69,949	96,297
Restricted funds				79,495	45,971
TOTAL FUNDS				149,444	142,268

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2025 – continued

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2025.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025 in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 11/11/25 and were signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah Del Tufo', written in a cursive style.

Katharine Sarah Del Tufo (Acting Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP FRS 102 (second edition) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The charity has taken advantage of the disclosure exemptions applicable to smaller charities.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Going concern

The board of trustees considers that the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate because there are no material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life. In the year of acquisition, depreciation is recorded based on the number of months the asset is in service.

Improvements to property	Straight line over 1 year
Furniture, fixtures & fittings	25% reducing balance
Computer equipment	33% of cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the board of trustees. Designated funds are unrestricted funds which have been allocated by the Board for particular purposes.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes.

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight-line basis over the period of the lease.

2. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

		2025	2024
		£	£
Grants	Core programme	219,429	180,236
Grants	Research projects	2,016	-
Registration fees	Courses	4,905	4,010
		226,350	184,246

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	2025	2024
	£	£
Reading Borough Council	60,376	40,000
New Directions (NLDC)	-	6,000
Multiply Project (RBC and NLDC)	10,977	5,607
WEA branch donation	-	5,000
Garfield Weston	10,000	10,000
National Lottery	101,719	108,629
Rotary - Santa Fun Run	-	2,500
Gerald Palmer Eling Trust	-	2,500
Berkshire Community Foundation	5,000	-
Marsh Charitable Trust	500	-
Shanly Foundation	3,000	-
Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust	3,000	-
BNRST donation	1,500	-
Cumber Family Trust	1,500	-
Reading University - Community Engagement Fund	6,898	-
RVA - Community Wellness Outreach project	14,960	-
Carewell Research Project	2,016	-
	221,445	180,236

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

3. OTHER INCOME

	2025	2024
	£	£
Room and facilities hire	5,834	5,581
Gain on disposal of laptops	-	30
Befriending work	500	-
Interest income	5,191	2,100
	<u>11,525</u>	<u>7,711</u>

4. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income / (expenditure) is slated after charging / (crediting):

	2025	2024
	£	£
Depreciation – owned assets	2,807	2,860
Other operating leases	792	759
Accounts and independent examination	504	504
	<u>4,103</u>	<u>4,123</u>

5. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

During the year to 31 March 2025, two of the trustees were paid for work they did outside of their trustee duties. None of the trustees were paid for their trustee duties.

Simran Aul received £795 (£795 2023/24) for teaching online seated exercises classes during the year. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" Outcome 2.

During the year to 31 March 2024, Raya Mohamed was paid £496 for working in the creche during the year. This was to provide cover for regular creche staff. This was funded by Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" Outcome 1 and Garfield Weston.

Trustees' expenses

Simran Aul was reimbursed a total of £171 during the year ended 31 March 2025 (£140 2023/24). These expenses cover her monthly Zoom subscriptions, which are required for her to teach online seated exercise classes. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" Outcome 2.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

6. STAFF COSTS

	2025	2024
	£	£
Wages and salaries	147,238	145,688
Social security costs	3,180	3,403
Other pension costs	2,844	3,090
	<u>153,261</u>	<u>152,181</u>

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2025	2024
Crèche	3	3
Tutor	6.5	7
Outreach and Support Worker	2	2
CEO	1	1
Business Development Manager	0.5	-
Administrator	1	1
	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>

No member of staff was paid more than £60,000 in the year.

Key management personnel

The charity considers its key management personnel to comprise the trustees and Aisha Malik, the CEO.

7. FUNDING FROM DCLG CONTROLLING MIGRATION

During the year 2020/21, the charity received a grant of £38,340 from DCLG Controlling Migration and also had carried forward grant of £45,252 from 2019/20. Some of this funding was used towards the running costs of the Centre during 2020/21, however it was clear that there would be an underspend of this grant. It was confirmed in August 2020 that the remaining grant could be transferred to unrestricted funds and used towards the running costs of the Centre.

£48,000 of the DCLG underspend was put in a designated reserve titled "DCLG (2022-24)" and this reserve was used towards the Centre's running costs for years 2022/23 and 2023/24. As at 31 March 2024, this reserve was fully spent.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Improvements to property £	Furniture, fixtures & fittings £	Computer & other equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2024	9,224	5,010	12,576	26,810
Additions	-	638	2,590	3,228
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	9,224	5,648	15,166	30,038
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2024	9,224	3,892	9,823	22,939
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Charge for year	-	385	2,422	2,807
At 31 March 2025	9,224	4,277	12,244	25,746
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2025	-	1,371	2,921	4,292
At 31 March 2024	-	1,118	2,753	3,871

9. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade debtors	5,277	456
Prepayments	11,350	11,343
	16,628	11,799

10. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE TO WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025 £	2024 £
Social security and other taxes	2,642	1,699
Other creditors	12,327	14,664
Deferred Income	2,700	29,337
Accrued expenses	2,011	2,123
	19,680	47,823

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

11. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2025	2024
	£	£
Within one year	39,600	39,600
Between one and five years	33,000	72,600
	<u>72,600</u>	<u>112,200</u>

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 01/04/2024	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2025
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	2,797	(28,893)	37,045	10,949
General Reserve	59,000	-	-	59,000
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	15,000	-	(15,000)	-
Designated Reserve (Premises)	19,500	-	(19,500)	-
	<u>96,297</u>	<u>(28,893)</u>	<u>2,545</u>	<u>69,949</u>
Restricted funds				
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 1	(1,589)	1,738	-	149
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 2	6,472	(5,582)	-	890
Reading Borough Council & New Directions - Mulptly Project	(1,017)	1,017	-	-
Reading Borough Council - Small Grants	-	-	-	-
Reading Borough Council - Household Support	-	1,955	(1,955)	-
Reading Borough Council - Afghan Women's Funding	-	480	-	480
National Lottery	39,721	29,370	(590)	68,501
Carewell Research Project	2,384	(2,384)	-	-
Berkshire Community Foundation	-	-	-	-
Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust	-	-	-	-
BNRST	-	487	-	487
Reading University - Community Engagement Fund	-	1,981	-	1,981
RVA - Community Wellness Outreach project	-	7,007	-	7,007
	<u>45,971</u>	<u>36,069</u>	<u>(2,545)</u>	<u>79,495</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>142,268</u>	<u>7,176</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>149,444</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

The movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	37,729	(66,622)	(28,893)
	37,729	(66,622)	(28,893)
Restricted funds			
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 1	25,000	(23,262)	1,738
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 2	15,000	(20,582)	(5,582)
Reading Borough Council & New Directions - Multipty Project	10,977	(9,960)	1,017
Reading Borough Council - Small Grants	5,000	(5,000)	-
Reading Borough Council - Household Support	6,000	(4,045)	1,955
Reading Borough Council - Afghan Women's Funding	9,376	(8,896)	480
National Lottery	101,719	(72,349)	29,370
Carewell Research Project	2,016	(4,400)	(2,384)
Berkshire Community Foundation	5,000	(5,000)	-
Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust	3,000	(3,000)	-
BNRST	1,500	(1,013)	487
Reading University - Community Engagement Fund	6,898	(4,917)	1,981
RVA - Community Wellness Outreach project	14,960	(7,953)	7,007
	206,445	(170,376)	36,069
TOTAL FUNDS	244,175	(236,999)	7,176

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued**2023/24 Comparatives for movement in funds**

	At 01/04/2023	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2024
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	7,193	(3,454)	(942)	2,797
General Reserve	56,000	-	3,000	59,000
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	15,000	-	-	15,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	19,500	-	-	19,500
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	22,275	(21,457)	(817)	-
	119,968	(24,911)	1,240	96,297
Restricted funds				
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)	5,197	(5,197)	-	-
Reading Borough Council - Outreach and Community Education (Lot 12.1)	11,769	(10,770)	(999)	-
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 1	(3,018)	1,430	-	(1,589)
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 2	5,013	1,458	-	6,472
Reading Borough Council & New Directions - Multipty Project	1,481	(2,498)	-	(1,017)
National Lottery	6,235	33,486	-	39,721
Healthwatch	10,000	(10,000)	-	-
Carewell Research Project	11,850	(9,467)	-	2,384
MHFA courses	1,270	(1,029)	(241)	-
WEA branch donation	-	-	-	-
	49,798	(2,587)	(1,240)	45,971
TOTAL FUNDS	169,766	(27,498)	-	142,268

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

2023/24 comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	32,373	(35,827)	(3,454)
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	-	(21,457)	(21,457)
	32,373	(57,284)	(24,911)
Restricted funds			
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)	6,000	(11,197)	(5,197)
Reading Borough Council - Outreach and Community Education (Lot 12.1)	-	(10,770)	(10,770)
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 1	25,000	(23,570)	1,430
Reading Borough Council - Closing the Gap Outcome 2	15,000	(13,542)	1,458
Reading Borough Council & New Directions - Multipty Project	5,607	(8,105)	(2,498)
National Lottery	108,629	(75,143)	33,486
Healthwatch	-	(10,000)	(10,000)
Carewell Research Project	-	(9,467)	(9,467)
MHFA courses	-	(1,029)	(1,029)
WEA branch donation	5,000	(5,000)	-
	165,236	(167,823)	(2,587)
TOTAL FUNDS	197,609	(225,107)	(27,498)

There were a number of transfers between funds during the year. All were approved by the trustees and, where appropriate, the funder. More details are given below.

General Reserve

The Board has set aside £59,000 in order to cover three months' working capital requirements and three months' rent payments. This is in line with the Centre's reserving policy.

Designated Reserves

In previous years, funds were held in designated reserves. However, this has been reviewed given the current proportion of restricted funds. At 31 March 2024, the majority of funds held were unrestricted, meaning that it was prudent to hold designated reserves for premises and staffing. At 31 March 2025, however, the majority of funds held were restricted and many of these are for premises and staffing costs. As a result, designated reserves are no longer held as at 31 March 2025.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 – continued

13. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

During the year ended 31 March 2025, one trustee was paid for work carried out that are outside of her trustee duties. Further details are given in Note 5. There were otherwise no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2025.

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

England & Wales - Charity number 1123017

Accounts

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2024
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

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1. CHARITY INFORMATION

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities', effective 1 January 2019.

The Trustees have complied with the duty in section 17(5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance.

Reference and administrative details

Registered Company number
06442616 (England and Wales)

Registered Charity number
1123017

Registered office
94 London Street
Reading RG1 4SJ

Trustees

Clare Furneaux
Hemamalini Sundararajan – resigned 16/11/2023
Jennifer Theron
Karen Rowland
Katharine Sarah del Tufo
Linda Smith – resigned 16/11/2023
Lucy England
Parveen Brar – staff representative
Raya Mohamed
Rosie Chambers
Simran Aul
Aydan Gasimova

Company Secretary

Aisha Malik (Centre Manager)

Independent examiner

Holy Brook Associates

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

Reading Community Learning Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated and registered as a charity. The company was incorporated on 3 December 2007 and registered as a charity on 29 February 2008 under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and it is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up its members are required to contribute a sum not exceeding £10 towards any outstanding debts.

We are delighted to announce that Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) were awarded a renewal of their Reading Voluntary Action Safe and Sound Good Governance Award. This is our second renewal, following our initial award in 2018 demonstrating that the charity continues to have good charity governance in place for all eight areas, from solid foundations through to protecting their beneficiaries.

The Board of Directors

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charitable law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles, one third of the directors must retire from office each year but can offer themselves up for re-election at the Annual General Meeting.

Board members provide a wide range of financial, HR, life experience and business and management skills. Board meetings are held at approximately six weekly intervals, currently using Zoom. We hope to have more face-to-face meetings in 2024/2025. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction and policies of the organisation. Sub-groups have been formed to take forward the work on human resources (HR), learner engagement, and fundraising. The Manager and a Tutor representative attend Board meetings in an advisory capacity. Day to day responsibility for the running of the organisation and the provision of services is delegated to the Centre Manager under the direction of the Board.

Recruitment, appointment, and induction of trustees

When an individual is being considered as a potential new Board member they are first invited to a meeting with the Chair and Manager where the work of the organisation and the contribution of the trustees is discussed. If there is mutual agreement that the applicant should continue with their application, they will be provided with appropriate written information about the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of trustees, and they may be invited to provide a CV, and attend a Board meeting as an observer. Their application will be discussed by the trustees and if appropriate they will be formally invited to join the Board. Further induction and training will be organised on an individual basis according to the specific needs of the appointee. Trustee packs are given to all new Trustees.

Members

Reading Community Learning Centre is a membership organisation. There are currently 59 members, mainly longstanding supporters of the work of the Centre. Reading Community Learning Centre's Board is accountable to its members for the operation of the organisation in line with its stated objectives. Members receive a report on the Centre's work and progress at least annually, and they are eligible to vote at general meetings of the organisation.

Risk management

The Directors have a responsibility to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to manage the finances effectively and guard against fraud. A number of measures and protocols have been established which aim to safeguard the finances of the Centre and to provide satisfactory systems in all areas of work which expose the charity to risk. The Board of Directors has continued to take a conservative approach to financial decisions during this year of the charity's life and has aimed to establish an appropriate reserve of funds as advised by the Charity Commission. A full risk register is maintained and reviewed at Board Meetings and staff are regularly reminded of the operational risks. Since early March 2020, the Manager has developed an additional Covid-19 Risk register and set of protocols.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

The Centre's objectives are, for the benefit of the public in the Reading area:

1. The relief of poverty and the needs of those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, in particular women and children and those from minority ethnic communities. This is done, for example, by:
 - a. providing general education and training, including language skills and other basic skills, to advance them in life and/or assist them to adapt within a new community; and
 - b. providing or assisting them in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, financial hardship or social circumstances with the objects of improving their conditions of life and relieving the effects of isolation.
2. To promote racial and religious harmony and raise awareness about, and to promote good relations between, persons of different racial and religious groups.
3. To advance the education of the public about issues relating to migrants, those seeking asylum and/or granted refugee status to help promote knowledge, mutual understanding and mutual and good relations between them.
4. To relieve financial hardship among people living or working in the Reading area by providing information, advice and support.

The Board has referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

Vision

Marginalised ethnic minority women in Reading achieving their individual hopes and fulfilling their aspirations.

Mission

Reading Community Learning Centre:

- offers marginalised ethnic minority women opportunities for social, educational, integration, and volunteering activities;
- provides services that address barriers to learning;
- supports progression into further education, social and employment opportunities; and
- encourages these women to raise their issues and concerns and engage with agencies.

Aims

Reading Community Learning Centre aims to enable marginalised ethnic minority women to be skilled, confident active citizens who contribute to society.

Overall objectives

1. To provide safe, first step educational opportunities for excluded ethnic minority women- for example:
 - building their confidence and independence;
 - developing language skills;
 - pre-employment skills; and
 - getting them started on journeys towards further education and employment.
2. To support the progression of ethnic minority women onto further education, volunteering or work activities for example:
 - working with other organisations to ensure a clear pathway into further education;

- providing supported volunteering opportunities in the Centre and access volunteering opportunities in other organisations;
 - working with employers; and
 - supporting the development of internal social enterprise within RCLC.
3. Through outreach and research work in communities, engage women who face cultural, religious and social barriers in learning and integration.
 4. To provide holistic women-centred support and advice that focuses on each women's individual needs. This will remove barriers to learning, integration and employment and support progression- for example:
 - free classes at convenient times during school hours
 - access to a free crèche
 - referral onto other organisations
 - help with filling in forms
 - advising how to access services; and
 - Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on educational and employment progression.
 5. To break down barriers between people from different cultures and to foster mutual support, respect, understanding and friendship. This will contribute to integration and community cohesion.
 6. To provide opportunities for learners to influence the work and direction of the Centre. To allow learners to voice their issues and concerns to external agencies on issues that affect their lives- for example, learner forums, local consultations for health, police and other agencies.
 7. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built in support at the Centre, as well as recruiting host community volunteers, supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression. This will support learning, friendship, and integration.
 8. To work with marginalised ethnic minority men alongside women when culturally appropriate or a particular need is identified.
 9. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2023-25

1. To recruit a consultant to coordinate an organisational review in 2025. This will support the strategic growth of the charity and enable us to provide the best support we can for learners.
2. To work with the Business Development Manager to raise funding and continue to diversify funding incomes, including:
 - a. income generation from the building
 - b. to strengthen the fundraising capacity of the Centre with a focus on strengthening the management resources and
 - c. seeking stable core funding, building on the work of the business development manager.
3. To provide a core programme for a minimum of 270 learners pa, involving recruitment, assessment, delivery, Information Advice and Guidance, signposting, and well-being support to learners and others approaching the Centre for support. (Note, our learner numbers are currently around 360 pa.)

4. To help to overcome isolation by creating a space for women to access information, advice and support, and build friendships, confidence and resilience.
5. To provide mental health support, awareness and referrals to partners and courses at the Centre. To put the women we work with at the heart of what we do by encouraging learners to influence and contribute to the work and direction of the Centre. We aim to do this through participation in the Trustee Board, as volunteers and through learner voice groups. We will also continue to monitor and evaluate our services to continually improve and ~~evolve~~ further develop our services for learners in response to changing needs.
6. To continue promoting and raising awareness of women's issues and rights, that are pertinent to the empowerment of migrant and refugee women who use the Centre. To embed these within the existing courses and maintain links with relevant healthcare organisations and social prescribers in light of the increased demand for support work resulting from the pandemic.
7. To further improve and strengthen the marketing and communication of the Centre as a source of support, advice, and signposting to learners, and other communities and organisations, building on increased awareness of the needs of migrant and refugee ethnic minority women.
8. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built-in support at the Centre. Supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression.
9. To continue to recruit community volunteers and develop integration opportunities with host community members and groups.
10. To increase cultural awareness and promote friendships creating bilateral benefits for the learners and the community volunteers who support them.
11. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory, and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners.

4. THE WORK OF THE CENTRE

Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) exists to help marginalised women from ethnic minority backgrounds to achieve their individual potential. The majority of the women we support are migrants, refugees or asylum seekers who speak little or no English, and often have limited contact outside of the home. No matter what barriers a woman faces we work alongside her as she overcomes obstacles to realising her aspirations. For many women, this includes improving their English, volunteering locally, gaining qualifications or securing a job.

Based in central Reading, we offer a programme of outreach activities, training classes, workshops and social opportunities at our Centre. These are designed to build confidence, increase skills and reduce the social isolation of local ethnic minority women, many of whom are amongst the most isolated, deprived and vulnerable in our community. In 2023/2024, we ran classes for 507 women from 41 different countries. A total of 1416 women were supported with information, advice and guidance (IAG) with support varying from benefit support, filling in forms, making telephone calls, and translation support, to accompanying them to access services at the Centre from Sep 2023-July 2024. Out of these women 39% were not RCLC learners and had been referred to us from friends, neighbours, other organisations and our partners.

Reading Community Learning Centre provides informal education and support for women who are unable to access more mainstream services because of the educational, social or cultural barriers they face. Some of the women who come to the Centre have had little access to formal education, most do not speak English, and sometimes they are not literate in their own language. Almost all the migrant and refugee learners face cultural and other challenges, and for some the Centre offers their only contact outside their immediate family. Many of the refugees and asylum seekers are living with children in poor hotels. The Centre's unique success has been in making learning accessible to the hardest to reach learners through a community-based approach, built on gaining the trust of often isolated communities and designing courses and services to meet their needs.

RCLC's educational provision creates ways into education for the most tentative and least confident of learners. Women with very limited language and literacy skills can take their first steps into learning here, and women who have gained qualifications in their countries of birth can access support to develop their English skills. This may mean coming to a social activity, joining an English conversation class or learning English through one of several practical creative classes. Learners are drawn from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The development of cross-cultural friendships is one of the most important benefits for many RCLC learners. Our model encourages community cohesion, breaks down barriers between cultures, and fosters mutual respect amongst the women. No other service in Reading reaches such a diverse group of women, giving us a unique insight into the needs of local ethnic minority communities.

Since the pandemic, supporting women around their mental health issues has become increasingly important and will remain a key focus.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES FROM APRIL 2023

Thanks to grants, donations and contracts from the organisations listed below, we have been able to run a sustained programme of activities throughout the year, for which the trustees are very grateful to:

- Reading Borough Council
- NLDC Grant from New Directions
- The National Lottery
- The DCLG Controlling Migration Grant
- Healthwatch
- WEA Branch
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Marsh Charitable Trust

- The Gerald Palmer Eling Trust
- Santa Fun Run (Reading Rotary)
- Multiply Project Funding (Funded by New Directions)
- University of Reading (CareWell Research Project) and
- Rental income from WEA and New Directions

RCLC continues to adhere to the government Covid guidelines and has a risk register in place. We no longer need to socially distance ourselves or wear masks but there is hand gel in every room, windows are kept open, and all staff were provided with Covid tests at the start of term to test themselves if they are ill with Covid symptoms.

In May 2024 the new Mayor of Reading, Councillor Glenn Dennis (Labour, Kentwood) was sworn in as the first Black Mayor of Reading. RCLC would like to say a huge thank you to the mayor as he has chosen RCLC to be one of his Mayoral Charities for 2024. We are really excited to have been chosen, especially as there are so many amazing charities in Reading.

Actions taken to incorporate safe teaching, learning and support at RCLC from April 2023:

1. All learners were enrolled face to face and were given a detailed induction on health and safety, the current Covid-19 protocols, and where to get support if they had symptoms of Covid-19.
2. At the start of each academic term RCLC Staff received the RCLC Induction training on, current RCLC policies, observations of teaching and learning, quality assurance, teaching paperwork, learner inductions, organisational structure and accredited safeguarding training, with revised Covid regulations. All staff were given Covid test kits and face masks if they still wished to wear them.
3. All enrolled learners were set up with their class WhatsApp group to learn, post homework, use to connect with the tutor and stay in touch with friends from the class.
4. RCLC stayed in contact with the elderly female learners from the Pakistani Community Centre (PCC), and the elderly Nepalese ladies who were enrolled on our ESOL Skills for Health Courses (previously held at the Warehouse) which took place at RCLC from autumn 2023. Our very popular online seated yoga course for the elderly learners from the PCC and Indian Community Association continued throughout the year with learners commenting on how much easier it was for them as they did not need to worry about travelling by bus yet still meet friends and do exercise safely in their own home.

Increased support needs

RCLC continues to experience an increase in demand as we support women and their families through the lasting effects of the pandemic. Many have experienced disproportionate challenges and difficulties around mental and physical health, loss of finance, social isolation and domestic abuse compounded by language barriers and racism. Covid-19 has further exposed some of the health and wider inequalities that persist in our society. The virus itself had a disproportionate impact on certain sections of the population, including those living in most deprived neighbourhoods and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

There is emerging evidence that the pandemic has increased Ethnic minority women's mental health support needs along with increased domestic abuse. Just under four in ten (36%) adults in Britain reported that during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown they have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety. Two in ten (21%) said that they have been finding lockdown difficult to cope with, while 14% said that social isolation was making 'relationships at home more difficult than usual'. This last figure rose to 19% for BME groups. A recent Red Cross Report identifies that following lockdown the situation has worsened for Ethnic minority people. Runnymede Trust report that in their survey over a third of Ethnic minority people (36%) have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety during the coronavirus crisis, with one out of five struggling with social isolation.

Cost of Living Crisis

The cost-of-living crisis in the UK has significantly impacted migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities around financial income, housing, access to healthcare and support services, and increased discrimination highlighted by the summer 2024 riots.

Increased Financial Hardship

Although 91% of our learners are currently unemployed those who do work are employed in low-wage sectors or rely on government support which has not kept pace with inflation. According to the Refugee Council, women in these groups often work in precarious jobs with low pay and poor working conditions, which means they are less able to cope with rising costs of living.

The Asylum Seekers' Allowance, which many asylum-seeking women rely on, has been criticised for being insufficient to cover basic needs. Women refugee and asylum seekers who are 27% of our learners, are often lone parents and struggle to feed their families. It is also difficult to open a bank account for our learners without having a financial history in the UK, without references and without evidence (often utilities and benefits are under the partner's name) which proves your address. Frequent failure of Asylum Support payments can leave them without any financial support for a period of weeks.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has highlighted that the current level of benefits fails to meet the real costs of living. Under current government guidelines;

- Asylum seekers have a legal right to Home Office accommodation and financial support but are not entitled to local authority housing, state benefits, or allowed to work (unless their claim is 1-year outstanding)
- Those in receipt of Section 95 at the hotel receive around £9 per week and those in dispersal receive around £48 pw. Not all asylum seekers are in receipt of Section 95.
- Refused asylum seekers (without an outstanding claim with the home office) are not eligible for Home Office financial support nor public funds.

Housing Instability

Refugee and asylum-seeking women frequently live in temporary accommodation or low-quality housing, which has become more problematic with rising energy and rent costs. Research by Shelter has shown that these groups are particularly at risk of homelessness or eviction due to the combined pressures of inadequate housing and the cost-of-living crisis. The Migrant Rights Network has documented that rising rent and utility costs disproportionately affected migrant women, who may also face barriers to accessing social housing.

Health and Wellbeing

Migrant and refugee women face barriers in accessing healthcare, and financial stress can exacerbate these issues. The Health Foundation's report on health inequalities indicates that economic hardship worsens health outcomes, and this is compounded for women facing both migration-related challenges and financial strain. The stress and anxiety related to financial instability and uncertainty about immigration status have negatively impacted the mental health of migrant and refugee women. Studies by the Mental Health Foundation suggest that economic pressures are a significant factor in the mental health crisis among these groups.

Barriers to Support Services

Language barriers, lack of information, and fear of deportation can prevent migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women from accessing support services. Research by the Refugee Women's Strategy Group highlights that these barriers limit their ability to obtain help with financial issues, legal advice, and other forms of support.

There is a shortage of tailored support services that address the specific needs of migrant and refugee women, as noted in various reports by organisations like the Refugee Council and the Migrant Resource Centre.

Employment Challenges

Migrant and refugee women often face workplace discrimination and exploitation, including lower pay and poorer working conditions. The TUC has reported that these women are more likely to be employed in the most insecure and poorly paid jobs, which leaves them especially vulnerable to the impacts of inflation and rising living costs.

Many migrant women have qualifications and skills that are not recognised in the UK, which forces them into lower-paid work. This is evidenced by 25% of RCLC's learners who have a degree or higher qualification from their country but cannot find work. This issue is documented in reports by the Migration Observatory and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Low skills and confidence, a lack of flexible job opportunities and caring responsibilities results in most of our learners living with, or at risk of poverty because they cannot access employment or take part in their local communities. Childcare costs have risen to the point where our beneficiaries can no longer afford to work, as the jobs available to them with limited skills do not pay enough to cover their childcare costs. RCLC'S creche is a huge lifeline for women as the lack of creche places for women locally, wanting to learn and knowledge of where these are and how to access them is a significant barrier to learning.

Accessing English Language and Vocational Programmes

The reduction in government funding, combined with broader austerity measures and shifting priorities, has led to fewer courses and a decline in ESOL enrolment. There has not been a national ESOL Funding strategy in England since 2009. The ESOL strategy for England plays a vital role in supporting non-native English speakers in their integration into society and the workforce. Since the 2009 strategy, there has been no single, overarching ESOL strategy document released by the government which has led to an increasing decline over the years in ESOL places, and funding for the sector. According to the Learning and Work Institute, funding for adult education, including ESOL, was cut by about 45% between 2010 and 2019. This reduction in funding has led to fewer available courses and limited resources for providers.

Legal restrictions (their residency status) prevent many of our learners from working and for some volunteering (especially when there is a DBS is a requirement).

Digital poverty and lack of ESOL places at a time when there is an increasing demand for language programmes which would enable integration, independence, access to healthcare and employment is vital in tackling inequalities for our learners. The number of hours offered by ESOL courses in Reading are limited and not enough for learners especially at the pre-entry level to progress with their English. Our long waiting lists include refused asylum seekers and those who have not been in the country for more than 6 months or those waiting for residency status who are not eligible for formal accredited ESOL programmes.

The cost-of-living crisis has intensified existing challenges faced by migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women in the UK. They are experiencing increased financial hardship, housing instability, compromised health and wellbeing, barriers to accessing support, and significant employment challenges. These issues are compounded by systemic barriers and discrimination, making it critical for targeted support and policy interventions to address their specific needs.

84% of the learners on our programmes state they want to work. Gaining confidence, English language skills, an understanding of the job market and basic tools to navigate the world of work (CVs, how to complete an application, where to look for work), and supported volunteering, are therefore essential ways of tackling unemployment, poverty, and health inequalities. RCLC is part of a 7-organisation contract with Reading Borough

Council to tackle poverty, discrimination and disadvantage and promote wellbeing, working in a formal delivery partnership with Refugee Support Group, Communicare, Reading Welfare Rights, Starting Point, Churches in Reading Drop In Centre, Christian Community Action and Readifood. A weekly benefits advisor from Communicare visits the Centre, seeing women on a 1:1 basis. Other than a small registration fee, all of our classes and activities are free of charge, and we know that this helps to increase accessibility as many have no recourse to public funds, 29% of the women are on benefits and 91% of them are unemployed.

Our research on the needs of ethnic minority women in Reading, in partnership with Reading University (2018), reinforced other local and national research into the barriers faced by refugee, migrant and ethnic minority women to achieving their potential and integrating into the community. The research found that limited English language skills impact upon migrant women's ability to integrate with the community around them, further compounding their sense of isolation, impairing their ability to gain employment and reducing their sense of well-being.

Together, with the cost of living, our organisational costs have gone up including the rent and utilities. The crisis is bringing to us women who are seeking help but have not had contact with other agencies and at least initially are not looking for classes. This requires support time from all our staff, including time to actively signpost to other agencies. This often involves staff or volunteers accompanying to support and interpret.

The crisis has had significant effect on our staff, all of whom are paid at Living Wage rates or above. Because of cost-of-living problems they are experiencing, the Board has reviewed staff salaries and increased staff pay due to increased hours worked and pay increases being awarded where appropriate, e.g. in line with National Living Wage levels and to ensure the pay we offer is fair and competitive. Our experienced and qualified BAMER staff team with lived experience must be paid at a rate where we can retain them, as they will not be able to work if their cost-of-living needs are not met. Our ex-teacher volunteers are on pensions and relatively financially secure, but the learner volunteers are in the same serious situation as all our learners.

There is considerable fearfulness at acknowledging financial issues like debt and lack of finance for food, utilities rent etc. There is limited history of using food banks though the mosques and other local charities are helping.

All these factors are further compounded by the fact that the vast majority of the women we support, even if they were highly educated, or if their families and husbands have money, are not free to spend money on themselves to pay for travel to courses, work or volunteering, on clothes, or food for themselves. The family budget has been considerably reduced during the cost-of-living crisis has meant that there is less money than ever in the household budget for the women in the family.

As the cost-of-living soars we are running double the number of creche sessions and classes pre-pandemic but are still struggling to keep up with demand and increasing waiting lists. At the end of the summer term 2024 our waiting list rose to 256 learners, the highest it has ever been (this equates to 50% of the entire learner intake for the academic year 2023/2024). Termly learner evaluation feedback from our learners confirms that the women only, free classes and creche in a friendly local setting for women are one of the many reasons they come to the centre to learn. Engagement and early intervention with the vulnerable women we support is a key strategy in breaking this cycle of poverty, unemployment, despondency, and declining mental health exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

5. COURSE PROGRAMME

Core Programmes run in 2023_2024

In the academic year 2023/2024, 507 (an increase of 20% since last year) women completed our core programmes which for the first time since the pandemic were all taught face to face at RCLC.

Autumn 2023

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners and Improvers
- Sewing Beginners, and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly Nepali Women taught at the Warehouse)
- English for Everyday Maths
- Online Seated Yoga
- Wellbeing Course

Spring 2024

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners and Improvers
- Sewing Beginners, and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly Nepali Women taught at the Warehouse)
- English for Everyday Maths
- Online Seated Yoga
- Wellbeing Course

Summer 2024

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers
- English Reading and Writing Beginners
- Sewing Beginners, and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly Nepali Women taught at the Warehouse)
- English for Everyday Maths
- Online Seated Yoga
- Wellbeing Course
- Gardening Workshops at the Museum for English Rural Life (MERL)

Supporting Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian Refugees

- The Centre has worked closely with the Refugee Support Group (RSG) in helping the families, especially the women, access ESOL classes and community resources. Under our current partnership with Refugee Support Group (Reading Borough Council Contract, Closing the Gap Outcome 2) we support the refugees and refer our clients to them to access immigration advice and support.

- RCLC has also regularly attended the Syrian Vulnerable Placement and Relocation (SVPR meetings) and Afghan Resettlement Scheme Case Management meetings (ARAP) following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan in April 2021. Since summer 2023 these meetings no longer take place and a new RBC led group called Sanctuary Partner Forum meetings replaced the Multi Agency Wellbeing Coordination Meeting - Ukrainian Support and Quarterly Refugee and Asylum Support Discussions (for Afghan, Syrian, Ukrainian and Hong Kong nationals), which RCLC attend.
- Since autumn 2021 we have seen a steep increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers enrolled on courses at the Centre reflecting the global migration trends, but also because we have received more referrals from partners such as RSG and Care 4 Calais. As these women have no recourse to public funding, they cannot access any support from the accredited learning providers in Reading but can from RCLC.
- Sadly, as Russia declared war on Ukraine in 2022, we started to see our first Ukrainian refugees at the Centre in the summer of 2022. However, as Ukrainian refugees can access publicly funded courses, healthcare and other support services, we have seen far fewer Ukrainian nationals come to the Centre. This is reflected in our data with around 4% of our learners coming from the Ukraine. We are continuing to work in partnership with the Council to support any Ukrainian refugee women who need our support.
- By the end of the academic year 2024, 27% of the learners were asylum seekers and refugees. This is a 5% drop in comparison to this time last year when the percentage was 32%. The vast majority of the new arrivals to our Centre in the last two terms have been from Eritrea, Iran and Afghanistan

The statistics below give a breakdown of the number of refugees and asylum seekers who studies on the core programmes at RCLC and which country they came from over the academic year 2023/2024

Refugees (total number over 2023/2024 = 57)		Asylum Seekers (total number over 2023/2024 = 81)	
Afghanistan	28	Afghanistan	12
Syria	8	Bangladesh	7
Turkey	2	Burma	1
Ukraine	7	Cameron	2
El Salvador	1	Columbia	3
Ukraine	6	El Salvador	2
El Salvador	1	Eritrea	14
Ukraine	4	Ethiopia	1
		Iraq	1
		Iran	13
		Morocco	1
		Namibia	3
		Nigeria	4
		Saudi Arabia	1
		Somalia	1
		Sudan	4
		Syria	4
		Turkey	2
		UAE	1
		Ukraine	4

Improving citizen engagement – learners engaging with agencies about issues that affect their lives

Guest speakers are invited to the Centre so that women have the opportunity to engage and access important information in a safe and private environment. The guest speakers are broadly categorised into terms which are themed on women's health, accessing local services, or are linked to women's rights and safety. This year we ran the following sessions and trips over the three terms as part of our enrichment activities for learners at the Centre;

Autumn 2023

- 62 women attended the two Chai and Chat sessions. In Spring 2023, RCLC started a new partnership with the Salama Project (Challenging hidden domestic abuse within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities through informal chai and chat) running Chai and Chat sessions twice per term at the centre. We have continued with these successful sessions and ran the Chai and Chat sessions twice a term from Autumn 2023. At the sessions women received information on how to report domestic abuse, where to access help and what is defined as domestic abuse in this country. Women from Alana House were also invited to attend.
- Thanks to our partnership with CommuniCare through the RBC Closing the Gap Outcome 1, Lynn (an advice volunteer from CommuniCare) joined the RCLC team to give benefit and advice sessions every Tuesday from 10-12pm during term time. At the start of each term Lynn, and our outreach workers promote this service to learners in the classes so that learners can access this vital support. In autumn Lynne presented information to 60 women about the services. Since Lynn joined, she has helped women with benefit applications, housing advice, utility bills, child benefit, disability benefit, support for carers and universal credit. Most of the women are those who need regular and extensive support due to the language barriers.
- 100 learners in the Centre received information from RCLC's two outreach workers on where and how to access free school uniforms and clothes, food parcels and food banks, furniture and benefit support from our partners but also other local charities.
- 62 women received Hep C tests at RCLC thanks to the Royal Berkshire Hospital Hep C Bus led by Jade Roberts (Royal Berkshire Hospital- Hepatology Team)
- 60 women received information received information from Together Outreach around their mental health services. Our partnership with Together for Wellbeing has enabled one of their outreach workers being based at the Centre once a week to deliver mental health support to our learners to improve their wellbeing, help build resilience and independence to help combat issues that directly impact their mental wellbeing such as experiences of poverty and inequality.
- In partnership with RVA and the NHS MEET PEET Team we started our successful termly health check days. 40 women received their free health checks and were able to receive advice and support around their health concerns. Three NHS health nurses were at the Centre to complete BMI, Blood pressure and diabetes checks on the women. The health check reports are then sent directly to the learners' GPs for follow-up visits, increasing access to healthcare.
- 56 women received information on symptoms and accessing support for breast, lung, bowel and cervical cancer from Cancer Champions.
- 15 women from the pre-entry class visited the Museum for English Rural Life (MERL) as part of their learning and enrichment activity
- 40 women engaged in presentations from Adviza careers advice on how to access their careers services, what they can assist with and how to make 1:1 appointments at the Centre.
- 4 women attended the walking clubs organised by Berks, Bucks & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust which benefitted the women with enhanced social integration, improved physical and mental health, informal language practice, and increased safety and support. Additionally, it provided a cost-effective and enjoyable way to explore their new environment and build a sense of community.

Spring 2024

- 100 learners in the Centre received information regarding Readifood's food parcels, New Beginnings and First Days Charities (who provide school uniforms) and Whitley CDA who have a school uniform and surplus food pop up on Thursdays as part of our cost-of-living theme for the term.
- 53 women attended the two Chai and Chat sessions.
- 4 women were interviewed by RBC Maternity services at RCLC with translation support provided by RCLC on their experiences of accessing pre pregnancy and post pregnancy care.
- 50 women received information received information from Together Outreach around their mental health services.
- 25 women received their free health checks and were able to receive advice and support around their health concerns with NHS MEET PEET Team
- 100 women received information on symptoms and accessing support for breast cancer and cervical smear tests from the RCLC outreach workers
- 12 women from the pre-entry and beginners reading and writing class visited the Museum for English Rural Life as part of their learning and enrichment activity
- 10 learners from the Intermediate English Conversation class visited Fedcap (a not-for-profit organisation that is delivering the UK Government's new Restart Scheme in Reading.) They help people to find employment, deliver training and personalised 1:1 support for those who are economically inactive and face barriers to work). 2 of these eligible learners were registered onto their programme.

Summer 2024

- 19 women attended the Chai and Chat session held at MERL
- Lynn (an advice volunteer from CommuniCare, and our outreach workers promoted their advice surgery to learners in the classes so that learners can access this vital support. In the summer term 50 women attended this presentation at Centre.
- 100 learners in the Centre received information from RCLC's two outreach workers on where and how to access free school uniforms and clothes, food parcels and food banks, furniture and benefit support from our partners but also other local charities.
- A representative from Fedcap did a presentation about their services to 15 learners in the English Conversation Beginners class, and how learners can access their services.
- 21 women received their free health checks and were able to receive advice and support around their health concerns with NHS MEET PEET Team
- 45 women engaged in presentations from Adviza careers advice on how to access their careers services, what they can assist with and how to make 1:1 appointments at the Centre
- In the summer of 2018 RCLC started a wonderful friendship between the volunteers who ran the Swallowfield Coffee Club and RCLC. This arose when the Coffee Club decided to donate the proceeds of their summer 2018 quarter to RCLC. RCLC in return, invited the volunteers to visit RCLC to thank them for their very generous gift, offering tea, Asian sweets and treats. The experience for the volunteers from Swallowfield and the ladies of RCLC to meet new people, share stories, cultures and food was a very moving one and something we knew we must continue as it helped learners to meet English speaking women as well as practice their English. They also got a chance to see rural life in Swallowfield. This year, 12 women from the English Conversation Classes visited Swallowfield for morning tea, coffee and delicious English cakes and in return the volunteers from the village came to our end of term celebrations in July which we held at RCLC. Our celebrations had music, dance and a cornucopia of world foods to share with the Swallowfield Coffee Club Volunteers.

6. ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Centre continues to collect evidence of its outputs and outcomes through:

- Enrolment forms and attendance records of people attending. These forms record the diversity of people participating in learning opportunities, retention and achievement. We also record data onto an educational management information system database.
- Tracking of progression into further learning, volunteering and work.
- Evidence of outcomes and progression through feedback forms, records of course reviews, regular 1:1 interviews completed by the staff, students and trustees using volunteers as interpreters as required.
- Case studies and individual learning records and diaries of individual learning journeys and evidencing the impact of engagement in informal learning.
- For the children in the crèche: enrolment forms and attendance records, termly reviews, feedback from parents and individual learning journeys for the children.

Learner Statistics

507 learners enrolled on our core programme of courses at RCLC 2023/2024

- 97% of our core programme learners have no UK qualifications or are at an entry level in ESOL
- 25% of learners have a degree or higher from their home country
- 91% of our learners are unemployed
- 29% of our learners are on benefits (it is important to remember that 27% of our learners were asylum seekers and refugees who could not work and were ineligible to claim benefits due to their immigration status so in reality this percentage should be much higher)
- 10% of our learners are retired
- 8% of our learner's work part-time or full-time
- 10% of our learners use the crèche, a lifeline for those who cannot afford childcare costs
- 30% of our learners are aged 51 plus; 27% 31-40; 20% are aged 19-30; 23% are aged 41-50.
- 11% of our learners are refugees and 16% are asylum seekers (this is a reduction by 6% from last year), whilst 61% of the learners had not been living in the UK for more than 3 years (this is an increase of 3% from last year). This year's figures are broadly similar to last years.
- 12% of learners disclosed that they needed additional support. Of this 12%, 35% of the women declared they had additional social and emotional difficulties, 27% had physical disabilities, 13% had mobility issues, 8% had mental health difficulties.
- 5% of the learners progressed into full-time or part-time employment and 2% onto volunteering. These figures are similar to last year as the vast majority of our learners had no qualifications or experience of working in their home country, and over two thirds of learners had not been living here for more than 3 years. It will therefore take them longer to progress onto volunteering or employment. This is also exacerbated by the fact that there are large sectors of the economy which were badly affected by the pandemic, and the lockdown people were furloughed, made redundant or left without any employment. The continued cost of living crisis is also making it harder for women to get into employment due to travel costs and childcare.
- 85% of our learners progressed onto internal courses at RCLC
- 9% of our learners progressed onto accredited courses with the WEA, Reading College or New Directions (this is nearly double the figure from last year) whilst 6% progressed onto other courses in the community.

- This year learners came from an amazing 41 different countries with the majority from the following; 14% from Afghanistan, 13% from India, 13% from Hong Kong, 11% from Pakistan, 7% from Nepal, 4% from Ukraine, 4% from Algeria, 4% from Sudan, 4% from Bangladesh, 3% from Syria, 3% Iran, 3% from Eritrea, 2% from Albania, 2% from Libya, 1% from Turkey, 1% from Kenya, 1% from Morocco, 1% from Iraq and under 1% from each of the following countries such as Ecuador, Columbia, Guinea, Russia, Spain, El Salvador, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Romania, Somalia, Saudia Arabia, Algeria, Namibia, Italy, Ivory Coast, Ghana, France, Ethiopia, China, Cameroon, Burma.
- Current learners speak 31 different languages with the majority speaking with the majority of learners speaking Urdu 13%, Chinese 13%, Arabic 10%, Pashto 8%, Nepali 7%, Hindi 6%, Dari 5%, Spanish 4%, Ukrainian 4%, French 4%, Farsi 3%, Bengali 3%, Tamil 3% and Amharic 2%,
- Our learners are mostly from the following wards; Abbey (17%), Katesgrove (12%), Battle (10%), Park (8%), Redlands (7%) Whitley (3%), Coley (4%), Norcot (3%), Church (2%), Tilehurst (3%), Southcote (2%)
- Data from the Indices of Deprivation 2019 showed the five most deprived areas in and around Reading were located within Whitley; The Meadway in Tilehurst (RG30 4 postcodes); the Honey End Lane area of Tilehurst (RG30 3 postcodes); Norcot (RG30 1 - RG30 6 area) and the Northumberland Avenue area (RG27). This year 24% of our learners came from these specific areas.

However, the poverty levels of ethnic minority groups can be obscured by the postcodes they live in.

Postcodes aggregate data across a range of socio-economic conditions. For instance, a postcode with a diverse range of housing and income levels can mask disparities within ethnic minority groups, so a postcode may include both affluent and less affluent households, which makes it difficult to determine the specific economic conditions of the ethnic minority populations within that area. As many of the RCLC learners live in temporary accommodation, refuges or hotels in central Reading, this also can mask this data.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the UK has reported that certain areas with high levels of deprivation might have significant ethnic minority populations, but poverty is not uniformly experienced. They note that while some postcodes are associated with high deprivation, the experiences of different ethnic groups within those postcodes can vary.

Research by The Equality Trust has demonstrated that economic disparities between ethnic groups are sometimes hidden by aggregate postcode data. For example, poverty rates among ethnic minorities might be higher than what is suggested by the overall data for the postcode area in which they live.

In summary, while postcodes can provide a broad sense of economic conditions, they can obscure the specific poverty levels experienced by ethnic minority groups within those areas. Detailed demographic and socio-economic research are often required to uncover the full extent of poverty and economic disparity within these communities.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Following initial interviews to identify learning needs, the Centre records achievement, recruitment and retention to check that quality learning is taking place, and that it has met the learners' needs. Progression opportunities are discussed termly by tutors and information advice and guidance advisors.

As part of the quality assurance procedures, regular teaching observations are undertaken which monitor methods of delivery, assessment, management of diversity, and equal opportunities, e-learning contributions and learners' comments. All tutors and crèche staff are qualified and supervised. Observations for the academic year 2023/2024 were undertaken in February, May and June 2024 by the Manager.

In addition to the observations undertaken by the Manager, New Directions observed a sample teaching session from the ESOL for Everyday Maths class which they funded. Each tutor also completes a course evaluation after every session.

LEARNER FEEDBACK AND OUTCOMES – THE DIFFERENCE OUR WORK MAKES

RCLC Learner Feedback 2024 summary

Approximately 10% of learners are interviewed yearly by staff and Trustees. This year a combination of various RCLC staff and a trustee completed these 1:1 evaluations. Learners and tutors also complete teaching and learning evaluation forms and a collection of case studies are also collated at the end of each term. A summary of the feedback is below.

These 26 interviews, covering 9 core classes interviewing in 4 languages were completed by staff and a trustee not involved with teaching. The interviews represent around 15% of the learners that term, and 7% of the learners for the year, a smaller number than usual because of time pressures. However, the findings mainly reflect those of previous years.

1. Reasons for coming to UK and feelings about Reading

Whilst some families were economic migrants, who were coming for improved living conditions, for better education for children and/or to join husbands or families, many learners had escaped from extremely dangerous countries. Whilst some learners were new to the UK coming as refugees or asylum seekers or on spouse visas, some learners had lived here for a long time but had not been able to learn English, mainly because of multi-generational family caring responsibilities, or lack of knowledge of the Centre's existence. Almost all those interviewed liked living in Reading, mentioning how central and close everything was, with some identifying the good schools and transport. Some felt it was quiet, but others felt the town centre was crowded. Many mentioned the high cost of housing. A number mentioned that people are kind and helpful and its multicultural nature is valued.

2. Learner Needs

Most of the learners interviewed wanted to improve their spoken English so they could better communicate in everyday situations like shopping or visiting the doctor or helping their children with homework. Many identified a loss of confidence having come to the UK and their wish to gain confidence and get out and meet new people. Others wanted to learn English, so they were not dependent on their husbands for translation. Most wanted to learn English to get a job in the future. Most women arrive at the Centre with very little English language, even if they had worked in their countries of origin, or lived in UK for years, and sought an opportunity to learn. Some of the women had never gone to school in their countries of origin or had only completed Primary School studies. Whilst some women had families in the UK, many were alone with husbands and/or children and faced isolation, stress, boredom and loneliness. Others specifically mentioned mental health issues.

3. How learners discovered the Centre and enrolment

Most learners first found out about the Centre through a friend who introduced them to the outreach/ support workers, or the administrator, though some were referred by other agencies. After visiting the centre and their needs assessed, learners often had to wait to get on language courses. The choice of classes was often not what was originally requested as that class (mainly English language or sewing) was full. They were helped to choose an alternative and their names put down for a future class.

4. Perceptions of the Centre and classes

There was universal praise for the quality and style of the teaching, and the friendliness, kindness and supportiveness of tutors and volunteers:

The best thing about RCLC is the support it provides. For example, the language classes have really helped me. The staff is very understanding and patient, which makes learning easier.

The staff and tutors are very helpful and understanding. They make learning enjoyable and accessible. RCLC is a good place for women who do not have confidence to go to other educational institutes. It provides friendly and supportive environment to learn.

A number of the learners valued particularly the Centre being a women only safe space, really valued the diversity of learners from many countries, and the importance of free courses.

The administrator and the outreach/ support workers and creche are also greatly valued, the phrases *kind, helpful supportive* and *friendly* were used in most interviews:

It feels like a second home where I can connect with others who share similar experiences.

5. Changes or improvements requested

Few changes were identified by learners in beginners or pre-entry conversation courses:

I like everything about RCLC and can't think of anything which can be improved.

However, far more suggestions were made for improvements or changes than in other years. The resounding request from the learners in other classes was for more language classes, especially conversation classes and sewing, as learners had to be on a waiting list for up to 2 terms. This was at a time when the number of language classes had been doubled but learners wanted more frequent classes and suggested a variety of options which will be considered by staff and Board members.

6. Outcomes- the difference coming to the Centre has made

The outcomes/ benefits for the learners cover a number of linked themes:

- **Almost all Learners reported increasing their skills, including English language skills, confidence and independence, allowing them to be more resilient, active and empowered members of their community, and better prepared for living and working in the UK, e.g. able to talk to neighbours, go shopping, get on a bus, visit the doctor or hospital, help with children's homework, or visit their children's school on their own. Learners also report benefits to their families of attending RCLC:**

The best thing about learning at RCLC is that now I don't feel shy. I feel confident when speaking even when my English isn't good...I never went to medical appointments alone before but two weeks ago I went with my daughter to her hospital appointment – no husband, no interpreter. I could not have done this without RCLC.

I can now complete paperwork alone. We have the same issues, so I don't feel shy...I feel supported in Reading, there are people that I know here and it's my home. My family like me coming here – it makes them happy because it makes me happy.

Looking at the feedback from pre beginners and beginners English language classes, many learners report how long it takes to get proficient, their struggles with confidence in speaking and writing, but do identify improved understanding of the English language.

- **Almost all learners report making new friends with women from different backgrounds, thus feeling less isolated and lonely and more connected by building stronger social networks and improved wellbeing:**

I have made new friends at RCLC, which makes me feel more connected, and we go to group study sessions.

- **Most learners report feeling happier, less isolated, with reduced stress and depression, improved mental health and feeling more supported and able to ask for help if needed:**

I felt lonely and depressed before coming to RCLC because I had no friends and family members, was not able to communicate in English, did not know who and where to go for an advice and information...I cannot explain how happy I feel since I started coming to RCLC. My English is improving, I have made new friends and my confidence is improved... the most important factor is that my health is improved, I don't feel depressed now.

A number of learners mentioned enjoying helping other learners whilst others spoke of taking steps towards employment by starting volunteering or starting online courses:

I have been getting help with job search and volunteering and now found volunteering role at the (hospital). My language skills and confidence improved since coming to RCLC. I can visit places myself when looking for a volunteering or paid role.

Learner Progression

- An incredible 100% of all our learners progressed on to either internal courses at RCLC, jobs, volunteering or external courses both accredited and non-accredited in the academic year 2023/2024. This figure highlights the importance of the Centre as an important steppingstone in the journey for our learners to be able to aspire and grow their skills, confidence and become active participants of the community in which they live.
- 5% of the learners progressed into employment or volunteering. This figure is 1% higher than last year (4% for 2022/23), which is primarily due to the fact that 97% of our learners in 2023/2024 had no qualifications, were at an Entry level ESOL level and over two thirds of learners had not been living here for more than 3 years

Learner Evaluation Forms Feedback

At the end of each course every learner completes a learner evaluation form. The statistics below outline the learners' feedback from their classes over the academic year 2023/2024

- 77% of learners felt their learning experience had been excellent whilst 23% said it was good.
- 73% said that the course level and content was excellent whilst the remaining 27% said it was good.
- 84% said that the way the course was taught was excellent whilst 16% said it was good.
- 82% said that the information and support which they received was excellent whilst 18% said it was good.
- 100% said that they felt they had improved their confidence and language skills.
- 98% felt that their health had improved since coming to the classes.

- 90% said that they would like to do more courses, volunteering or get a job after finishing their classes at RCLC.
- 94% said that they had made new friends since coming to the Centre.
- 96% said that they now knew who to go to, to ask for help and support.
- 98% said that they felt happier since coming to the Centre to learn.
- 98% said that they had learnt new skills.
- 96% said they felt they were now more confident to go out and do other activities since joining the classes.
- 99% said that they felt more confident in their everyday lives.

Learner Engagement

Learner evaluations are held at the end of each term during which learners of the Centre evaluate their learning programmes and raise any issues, concerns, improvements or just highlight what they enjoyed most about their time at the Centre.

In autumn 2016 we started our Learner Voice Forum to engage the learners more deeply in planning and decision making about the running of the Centre. We held a series of meetings to engage learners from the classes and talk to them about what a learner forum is, how they could be involved, who would like to be a part of it and why it was important for them to be involved. A group of 12 learners formed the learners' forum group and from their discussions we were able to discuss their ideas at our strategic business plan day. It was their idea to raise money for the Centre by running pampering sessions at the Centre, selling food and other items. We implemented this by running a termly Women's Day where we raise money for the Centre by selling international food made by the learners, selling beauty treatments by the learners and tutor of the beauty class as well as a bric-a-brac sale.

Sadly, since the pandemic we have been unable to run any of fundraising activities which had been proposed by the learners, but the learner voice group will hopefully restart in 2024/2025

Volunteers

Some learners have chosen to undertake additional voluntary activities at the Centre. As a small organisation with only a small number of part-time paid staff, volunteering is central to the success of our work. For the volunteers, being able to contribute to the community provides satisfaction and enables them to develop and practice skills they may not otherwise be able to use. For some volunteers it has also provided a basis from which to move into paid employment.

During 2022 we welcomed our volunteers back into the classroom following the end of social distancing and we built up our volunteer group again over the academic year 2023/2024

This year we had 15 learner volunteers of whom:

- 6 were classroom volunteers.
- 4 were admin volunteer.
- 4 were volunteer translators.
- 1 was an outreach volunteer.

We also had 2 long-term classroom volunteers who were ex-teachers. Sadly, we said goodbye to both of these volunteers, Rita Parr who started volunteering at the Centre from 2015 and Sylvia Cox (who was shortlisted for the Senior Changemakers, Volunteering Champions for volunteers over 65 years old in 2024). Rita had worked as a classroom assistant in the English conversation classes for 9 years at RCLC and Sylvia had supported pre-entry learners for the last 3 years. We also had 1 volunteer who used to work for Healthwatch Reading and another who later joined the board in 2023. In total we had 19 volunteers in 2023/2024

RCLC want to extend their heartfelt gratitude to each of our amazing volunteers for their incredible support and dedication. Their efforts in the classroom have made a significant impact, and RCLC truly appreciate their hard work and commitment. Their willingness to contribute their time and skills is invaluable, and it has greatly enriched our community. Thank you for making a difference and helping RCLC to achieve our goals.

Work Experience Students from The Holt Secondary School

In Summer 2024 RCLC opened its doors to a pair of talented work experience students from the Holt 6th Form in Wokingham. As an educational charity, we have always believed in the power of education to transform lives, and this exciting initiative reflects our commitment to providing opportunities for all, especially those from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, Refugee, and Asylum Seeker (BAMER) communities.

Our work experience program aims to offer valuable insights and hands-on experience to young individuals who are passionate about making a difference in the world. We understand that access to opportunities can sometimes be limited, especially for those facing various challenges, and we are dedicated to breaking down those barriers. The students joined us to support learners in the classrooms, administration, creche and policy research.

8. OUR PARTNERSHIPS

During the pandemic RCLC was a part of various local steering groups and forums which we continued to be a part of following the pandemic. Some of these partnerships have evolved so that they are a means of building new partnerships for funding, and sharing good practice and knowledge, as well as means informing health and wellbeing action plans of Reading Borough Council and health. These partnerships include attending many Reading Borough Council and VCS led (Reading Voluntary Action RVA) steering groups listed below;

- Reading Borough Council (RBC) Narrowing the Gap Meetings and CTG Meetings
- Mental Wellbeing Health Forum Meetings
- Health Inequalities
- Local Strategic Partnership meetings such the RBC Led Loneliness and Isolation Steering Group
- RBC Older Peoples Working Group Meetings (OPWG)
- Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) led Readifriends Meetings and Forums
- RVA led Volunteer Development Group Meetings
- Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) led VCS Leaders Meetings
- VCS Intelligence Network meeting (VIN)
- RBC led Physical Disability and Sensory Network Meetings (PDSN Meetings)
- RBC led Sanctuary Partner Forum Meetings (these replaced the Multi Agency Wellbeing Coordination Meeting - Ukrainian Support and Quarterly Refugee and Asylum Support Discussions for Syrian and Afghan nationals)

We are building strategic partnerships with voluntary, statutory and other organisations whose work affects our learners, to provide appropriate and stronger services and opportunities for them. We raise awareness of the issues and needs of the women we serve, wherever possible using their own voices. We sit on many panels influencing policy in Reading, and act as a source of expertise on the issues facing the women we serve for other organisations.

We have formal partnerships with RefugeeGroup, and Communicare, Christian Community Action (CCA), Starting Point (Mustard Tree), Readifood (Faith Christian Group), Reading Welfare Rights, and CIRDIC (Churches in Reading Drop In Centre). We have informal partnerships with Social Prescribers (Reading Voluntary Action), Reading Voluntary Action Schools and Parent Engagement Officer, ACRE, Berkshire Women's Aid, Alafia, Oxford Road FGM, City of Sanctuary, Welfare Rights, Citizens Advice Reading (CAR), Readifriends, Adviza, Indian Community Association (ICA), Pakistani Community Centre (PCC), Nepali groups such as SSFA, REGBA, Local CCGs, South Reading Patients Forum and Healthwatch

Through attendance at many meetings (RBC led and RVA led) we have been promoting the work of the Centre and this year engaged in new and exciting partnerships promoting the work of the Centre, increasing referrals both to RCLC and from RCLC as well as providing more opportunities for the women to engage in new activities since the pandemic. Please see below a list of the regular meetings and panels RCLC contributes to locally over 2023/2024 in addition to the above listed RBC and VCS led ones.

- Reading Integration Board (RIB) Health Inequalities
- Quarterly subcontractor's meetings with New Directions
- New Directions led Reading ESOL Providers Network
- Working in partnership with GPs meeting (social prescribing, hosted by Reading Voluntary Action)
- RAN (Reading Advice Network) meetings
- CPAR Partnership Meetings (Research project with Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality, Reading Voluntary Action, RCLC, RBC)
- CareWell Research Project Meetings (University of Reading, Refugee Support Group)
- Migrant Women's Voices and Sanctuary Conference Meetings (Reading University, Refugee Support Group)
- Berks Oxford and Bucks (BOB) VCS Health Alliance Meetings

DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

NEW PROJECTS

Promoting friendships, Reducing Loneliness and Isolation: Engage Befriending and RCLC

RCLC successfully applied for the RBC Covid-19 Small Grant for £10,000 towards the RCLC Befriending Facilitator post and Reading Voluntary Action also gave £10,000 to RCLC from its Ageing Well Fund to match the RBC funding, to start the small befriending programme for a year. This new funding was to be used to fund a 2 day per week facilitator who would receive training on how to set up the befriending programme for RCLC through Engage Befriending (Mustard Tree). Mustard Tree would provide training to the newly recruited bilingual, female befriending volunteers. Regular trainings would be received through Engage.

However, in agreement with RBC, RCLC transferred this funding to Mustard Tree to utilise this funding towards their current Befriending Work focussing on minority ethnic befriending volunteers instead. This was because RCLC were successful with their Lottery Application which required setting up 2 new posts, in addition to a new IT Tutor post within the space of 6 months. Hence starting another new Befriending Project would have been very difficult to deliver in light of all of the other new posts.

Engage Befriending, in partnership with RCLC identified 15 learners who wanted to become Befriending Volunteers. The RCLC outreach workers supported them to complete their volunteer application forms to join Engage Befriending as bilingual befrienders. They also completed DBS checks and their Befriending Safeguarding training. At present we have 6 learners who are being matched to people for befriending.

Jelly Arts and RCLC

A new partnership project between Jelly Arts and RCLC started in the autumn of 2022. This involved a programme of eight sessions (six at RCLC and two at Jelly Arts in Broad Street Mall) teaching hand sewing techniques on scrap fabrics to create a small quilt. The course focused on building new friendships to reduce loneliness and isolation, as well as learn new sewing skills. A total of 7 learners attended this course in 2023. The sessions were drop ins, open to all ethnic minority women to come together, have a cup of tea and make friends whilst also produce a piece of artwork to display at RCLC. The course was funded by Reading Borough Council's Small Grants Programme.

Following on from this successful programme Jelly Arts received funding to start a new course in Autumn 2024. RCLC will be running another 10-week course with Jelly Arts which will look at heritage and stories from fabrics, knitting and crochet which learners will bring to the class. The classes will also take place at the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) where the learners' work will be displayed in 2025.

Food for Families, Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) and RCLC

In partnership with Food 4 Families and MERL and following on from the successful gardening programme in Summer 2023 for 11 learners, RCLC ran a 5-week course linking health and wellbeing with gardening in the Summer 2024 term. A total of 9 learners completed this course. The aim of the project was for learners to

- Share knowledge about their favourite plants (from their country of origin) and how to grow them
- Growing and harvesting fresh English vegetables and herbs on a budget
- Growing flowers for picking and improving their mental and physical wellbeing
- Helping to care for The MERL garden and its wildlife.

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 06442616 (England and Wales)

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1123017

Dadima's Walks, (Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) and RCLC.

RCLC are looking forward to a new project which will start in Autumn 2024 to develop a Chai and Chat group at the MERL where women will walk to the MERL and share stories over different teas and how they make them from their countries. This will be in partnership with another organisation called [Dadima's Countryside Walks](#)

9. READING BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMISSIONED WORK

Closing the Gap Overview (Reading Borough Council)

Closing the Gap (CTG), which was previously commissioned under the Narrowing the Gap II framework, is an established programme within Reading for the commissioning of services to:

- tackle poverty, discrimination and disadvantage.
- promote wellbeing; and
- support thriving communities.

CTG brings together funding from Public Health, Adult Social Care, Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Resources Directorate along with additional funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group to continue support for these causes and further the good work already undertaken to date. Tenders are invited from organisations to enable people in Reading to overcome disadvantage and achieve better outcomes which have been divided into three tender areas listed below;

- Outcome 1: To support people to get out and stay out of poverty
Indicative Funding £270,300 per annum
- Outcome 2: To build resilience, independence and wellbeing, connect people to support and focus on individual and community strengths
Indicative Funding £551,700 per annum
- Outcome 3: To invest in VCS infrastructure support
Indicative Funding £158,000 per annum

RCLC successfully applied in partnership with 6 local charities Communicare, Christian Community Action (CCA), Starting Point (Mustard Tree), ReadiFood (Faith Christian Group), Reading Welfare Rights, and CIRDIC (Churches in Reading Drop In Centre) for a partnership tender for outcome 1, and were successful.

RCLC also applied in partnership with Refugee Support Group for outcome 2 and were also successful with this tender, focusing on work with refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking families in Reading. These new 3 year partnerships started in November 2022 and will end in Nov 2025.

Since this partnership was forged, we have delivered the following under each of the 2 outcomes. The funding from both outcomes contributes to the core work of the Centre. The numbers listed below are those learners and women funded through RBC funding.

Outcome 1 (over 4 quarters Year 1 Nov 2022-Jul 2024)

- 600 women provided with advice and outreach by Reading Community Learning Centre per year (our target is 250 per year)
- 246 women attended courses at RCLC (our target is 102 per year)
- 42 children accessing the creche at the Reading Community Learning Centre (our target is 18 children per year)

Outcome 2 (over 4 quarters Year 1 Nov 2022-July 2024)

- 121 Elderly Pakistani and Indian women with pre-existing health conditions to complete the online seated yoga class per year (our target is 30 per year)
- 93 Elderly Nepali women to complete the ESOL Skills 4 Health course per year (our target is 30 per year)
- 1,015 Number of BAME women that have received outreach support and IAG (our target is 45 per month)

As can be seen from the above figures, RCLC has already reached the majority of its yearly targets before even adding the figures for the fourth quarter which will cover the months Sep- Nov 2024 for the end of year 2.

New Directions College

RCLC was in a 2-year partnership with New Directions College (ND). As a subcontractor for New Directions, we have delivered non accredited learning programmes for 120 migrant ethnic minority women over the academic year 2022/2023.

The funding RCLC received was from the Neighbourhood Learning In Deprived Communities (NLDC Fund) which supports local Voluntary and other third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. RCLC engages with some of the most vulnerable learners from Reading and were commissioned by New Directions College to continue to successfully widen participation, engage learners who were traditionally hardest to reach, and promoting lifelong learning. In the academic year 2022/2023 RCLC achieved its target of 120 learners

Our contract with New Directions College came to an end at the end of Summer 2023 because of a change in government focus for these funds. However, from Spring 2023 RCLC was given new funding as part of the New Directions Multiply Project to run ESOL embedded maths classes for our learners. This new 10-week course has been part of our core programme of classes since Spring 2023. The funding for this project will come to an end in Dec 2024. The ESOL for Everyday Maths course aims to develop the numeracy skills of improvers ESOL learners and to build their confidence in recognising and using numbers in their everyday lives. The course covers important numeracy skills such as;

- Maths for cooking
- Maths for understanding simple bills
- Maths for shopping
- Helping children with maths
- Simple budgeting
- Maths to read transport timetables and buying tickets

As part of this partnership, RCLC reported on the courses being delivered with subcontractor's reports every month, had quarterly review meetings, attended New Directions College trainings, and had quality review meetings which included observations of teaching and learning. In addition they looked at all of our teaching paperwork, CPD, meeting agendas, safeguarding, prevent, RCLC Business plan and learning and induction paperwork. New Directions were very happy with our quality checks and assessments and have no recommendations regarding our quality. In the academic year 2023/2024 a total of 24 learners have completed this course

New Directions College (ND) will also be continuing this partnership by continuing to use the Centre as one of their community teaching venues. This academic year they hired the classroom on Tuesdays and Thursdays and will continue with this format into 2024/2025. Not only will this generate some additional rental income for the centre but also provide in house progression opportunities for RCLC Learners onto accredited courses.

10. RCLC AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

We aim to influence policy and service development across Reading, by advocating for our learners, and wherever possible supporting them to voice their concerns and ideas to agencies and organisations directly. Over this past year we have worked with researchers, including at universities, on the issues and barriers faced by ethnic minority and refugee women in our community. This year RCLC have taken part in the following research project listed below which will end in Nov 2024.

CareWell Research Project

This 2-year research project is in partnership with The University of Reading (UoR) and RefugeeSupport Group. RCLC has employed 3 community researchers with lived experience of migration and/or seeking sanctuary as a refugee or asylum seeker to find out about the care experiences of families who have relatives in different countries and how caring responsibilities affect their wellbeing and opportunities for education, employment, social activities. We also wanted to find out about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected families with their caring responsibilities and accessing services. The three researchers have just completed their interviews of families both here and abroad, and the analysis of this data is taking place. In addition to these interviews with 9 families, two of our RCLC staff who care for their own families both here and abroad have also been interviewed.

Over 2023/2024 the interviews have been transcribed and translated for data analysis. In June 2024 RCLC were proud to have been part of the interdisciplinary symposium which aimed to explore the relationship between migration, care and intersecting inequalities within the post-pandemic geopolitical landscape of immobility regimes, crisis-driven displacement, care deficits and ageing populations. The symposium reflected on how paid and unpaid caring arrangements are shaped by intersecting inequalities in diverse migration and transnational contexts. Paper and plenaries addressed issues of caring practices across the life course, intersectionality and inequalities in access to formal care and social protection globally. These highly politicised and emotive issues pose key challenges and dilemmas for policymakers, practitioners and family members, as well as researchers and academics interested in transnational migration, care and social protection.

11. REMOVING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

To achieve our strategic objective that focuses on removing barriers to learning, we offer excellent learner support and crèche facilities.

Learner and non-learner Information, Advice and Support

The Centre provides hands-on support, advice and encouragement, as many of the people we work with face difficulties that go well beyond their learning needs. Several of our learners have been through very traumatic experiences due to war or becoming refugees or are isolated from their families. The Centre is often seen as a first port of call for help by learners and others with a wide variety of problems and difficulties including accessing benefits, experiencing domestic violence, and dealing with immigration issues. Dealing with a complex society like ours is daunting for women with few language skills and little experience outside the home, or for those who have been traumatised by their current situation or recent history. For many women a simple referral to another agency is not enough. This work has become even more important during the Cost-of-Living Crisis.

This year our informal drop-in sessions have been mostly face to face (70%) and through telephone calls (27% and 3% through emails). RCLC has continued supporting women to access local services and getting expert help when they needed it, e.g., by making appointments, acting as a link between the user and the service, explaining what letters or forms are about, befriending telephone calls, translating, giving vital health information and sometimes acting as an advocate for a vulnerable user. Our evaluation work shows that the Centre's work breaks down isolation of the women and their families and helps them link into the wider community. In addition, there is evidence from the literature on global maternal literacy that shows that mothers who can speak, read and write in the language of the country they live in have healthier children who are more able to thrive in education themselves. Around 30-40% of our learners require additional support.

Building on the Centre's current support work with around 70 - 90 vulnerable ethnic minority women per month, RCLC applied and successfully received grant funding from The National Lottery for an additional Outreach Worker/ Social Prescriber to employ a new member of staff for 14 hours per week to offer a listening ear and active signposting and referral service to those who with less extreme mental health issues, especially those requiring weekly support calls. This released the current outreach and support worker to further develop work with people, mainly women, with more extreme examples of stress, depression, and mental ill health from February 2023. By adding a new member of staff to the team we were able to engage with double the number of women per month (as can be seen from our data). The support for clients consisted of:

- Information, advice and guidance on progression, RCLC Courses, Covid, vaccines, accessing health care services, identifying and supporting women to get vaccinations
- Providing Information and supporting them to access services such as food parcels, benefits, housing, clothes for their children, mental and physical health support from the NHS and direct referrals to our partner organisations part of the CTG Contract.
- Translation support, form filling, supporting refugees and asylum seekers based in the local hotels and accompanying learners to appointments.
- In house referrals to CommuniCare, who as part of the partnership have a weekly benefit surgery at RCLC on Tuesdays
- Referrals to Reading Voluntary Action Social Prescribers; and

- Providing mental health support over the phone by our trained mental health first aider and referring learners onto Talking Therapies, Adult Social Care, Together (an outreach service for refugees and asylum seekers and the Intercultural Psychological Clinic.

Over the academic year 2023/2024 RCLC has referred learners and non- learners to the following organisations;

- 109 women to CommuniCare
- 22 women to NHS Health Check Service
- 12 women to Workers Education Association (WEA)
- 8 women to Together Outreach
- 7 women to Readifood
- 3 Mustard Tree
- 2 New Directions College
- 3 women to RVA Social Prescribers
- 3 women to Talking Therapies
- 1 woman to RBC Social Services
- 1 woman to Reading Welfare Rights
- 1 woman to Refugee Support Group (RSG)
- Other referrals were made to Adviza, Age Uk, Mencap, the local Mosque on Oxford Rd, NHS 111, MacMillan Cancer, Newbury College and SmartWorks

The largest number of referrals were made to RCLC (42%) as the majority of women were interested in courses or needed further support and advice from RCLC.

A total of 1416 information, advice and guidance sessions for women were carried out at the Centre over the academic year 2023/2024. Out of these women 39% of these were not RCLC learners and had been referred to us from friends, neighbours or other organisations and our partners.

New learners mostly come to the centre through word of mouth from a friend, relative, previous learner, a relative or through RCLC outreach work. Around 174 women came to the Centre through this route. Refugee Support Group has been our largest referrer this year (last year it was Care 4 Calais), referring 68 women over the academic year 2023/2024 to RCLC. Other referrals to RCLC over the academic year are listed below;

- 66 women were referred by Job Centre Plus
- 53 women were referred by Care 4 Calais
- 50 women were referred by the Pakistani Community Centre (PCC)
- 29 women were referred by RVA Social Prescribers
- 17 women were referred by Reading Borough Council
- 24 women were referred by RBC Adult Care and Social Services
- 7 women were referred by Reading College
- 7 women were referred by WEA
- 6 women were referred by CommuniCare
- 3 women were referred by Together Outreach
- 2 women were referred by New Directions College
- 2 Women were referred by Berkshire Women's Aid

Other referrals were from Age UK Berkshire, Launchpad, Macmillan Cancer, Royal Berkshire Hospital, the Walk in Health Centre, Thames Valley Police, Brighter Future's for Children, Ukrainian Community Centre, Networking events and local schools.

Responding to learners' mental health needs

In response to the learner feedback and an increase in mental health concerns during the pandemic, RCLC in partnership with Compass Recovery College and our trained mental health tutor, delivered a termly programme of health and wellbeing courses in 2022-23.

Following these successful workshops, RCLC developed their own mental and physical wellbeing courses with graded language so that women with low levels of English could still understand, follow and implement the simple wellbeing techniques they were taught in class. These five-week courses, called Wellbeing Courses were taught every term and had simple yoga sessions built into each lesson. A total of 33 women completed these courses from Autumn 2023- Summer 2024

Crèche

Alongside its other activities, the Centre provides a crèche which offers important support for children from 4 months to 4 years old.

Many of these children have had little social contact outside their family and almost all have no English language when they arrive. Some are unfamiliar with toys or have no experience of playing with other children. Others are living in, or have already lived through, extremely difficult circumstances, including as refugees or asylum seekers in hotels.

Through the crèche, children learn to speak English, to be confident separated from their mothers, and to take part in educational play which stimulates social, emotional, physical and intellectual development, in the care of a multicultural team of well-trained, loving workers. The crèche also helps to develop language skills and the ability to socialise and provides informal parenting advice and support. This provides crucial school readiness skills.

We employ two crèche workers and a crèche supervisor. In the academic year 2023/2024, 103 children were able to access the creche.

Evaluations from parents/ carers of children in the creche showed that;

- 100% of the children were very happy in the creche and thought that the creche was excellent.
- 93% of the parents thought that their child had learnt new things and that their knowledge had improved.
- 83% said that the care their child received in the creche was excellent whilst 17% said it was good.
- 100% of the parents/ carers thought that their children were safe in the creche.
- 66% found that the information they received on their child's development in the creche was excellent and 34% said it was good.

RCLC would like to say a huge thank you to Ellen Law (RCLC Carewell Project Researcher) and her wonderful group, The HongKongers Youth Team (aged 11-17) who as part of their charitable Christmas activities collected and donated some beautiful presents for the children in the RCLC Creche in November 2023.

Thank you so much from all the children and parents in the crèche for your generous gifts for the festive period. We had some presents left over so we will be giving some more presents out to the children in Nov 2024 as well.

12. MAINTENANCE OF THE CENTRE

The Centre continues to be a comfortable and well-maintained environment for learners to attend. We have ensured that our IT equipment and software is kept up-to-date and we maintain robust security software. Considerable funds have been spent on maintaining security, fire equipment and alarms, safety lighting, electrical testing and gas heating maintenance in the building.

The Centre has been fully open for the academic year 2023/2024 as we have gone back to pre-pandemic opening times and regulations. Maintenance of the building includes the annual checks for;

- fire alarms and carbon monoxide alarms
- PAT testing and electrics
- emergency lighting
- fire extinguishers
- cleaning
- heaters, carbon monoxide alarms and boiler
- computer equipment, software, back up clouds and virus protection.
- Covid-19 hand sanitisers, and lateral flow tests for staff and volunteers

As a result of the changing government guidelines regarding safe working and learning environments, the robust Covid-19 Risk register was updated and reviewed before the start of each term. All staff and volunteers also receive inductions on the risk register before the start of each term. Learners coming into the Centre were and still are given inductions on how to keep themselves and others safe at the Centre.

Since the charity SmartWorks, moved out to new premises across the road we have not rented out the top floor. Due to the increase in the number of learners wanting face to face classes and learner numbers increasing to a record high this year we added an extra English intermediate conversation class, a maths class and a mental health and wellbeing class, and moved the sewing class to the top floor so that we could free up the accessible ground floor classroom for room hire for New Directions College. The front room on the top floor has been converted into the outreach office for staff and the smallest office on the top floor is used by CommuniCare and Together Outreach for weekly benefit advice and mental health support surgeries.

From Dec 2022, RCLC also gained a new landlord, Richard Sharples, who is really interested in our charity work and has visited a couple of times. We had an increase in rent from £36,000 per annum to £39,600 per annum. We have a break clause in the summer of 2026 and a rent review in January 2027.

ProvenWorks and RCLC

In Summer 2024, the incredible staff of ProvenWorks gave up their time and energy on one of the hottest days of the year in August, to paint our creche and one classroom at RCLC. The enthusiastic, strong team of 14 led by their CEO Joel, rolled up their sleeves and freshened up the centre to make it bright and welcoming. Their enthusiasm and commitment to giving back to the community have truly made a difference and has enabled the charity to use the funding which they would have spent on labour and materials on providing free classes for migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women. RCLC would like to say a big thank you to everyone who participated in this wonderful initiative.

Other repairs over 2023/2024

- The gutters at the front of the building were fixed in Mar 2024.
- The water cylinder had to be replaced at RCLC. This cost £1674. The landlord kindly contributed £500 towards this cost.
- Verisure are our new security alarm providers this service includes
 - video doorbell,
 - door sensor alarms, monitored front door and security if we are broken into
 - Direct connection to the police and 24 hours service support
 - Wi-Fi and wireless systems (we will have a sim card, app and a battery powered system) so if we have a power cut or our wifi goes down the security systems will still work
 - Panic alarms

13. STAFFING

During 2023/2024 we continued to employ a Manager who has worked tirelessly to manage the team and, with the Trustees, promote and develop the work of the Centre and build new partnerships. In addition, we now employ two part-time Outreach Workers, Shaheen Kausar and our newest addition to the team, Noreen Khan (this post is funded by the National Lottery) whose work has been invaluable in spreading the word about our service, supporting women on the phone and face to face with advice and guidance including referrals and signposting. Noreen sadly had to resign due to family commitments, but we are pleased to welcome our new outreach worker, Rohama Kanwal to the team in June 2024. Rohama has a background of working for local charities giving advice and guidance to vulnerable people in the community. We also employ a part-time reception worker and data administrator who records, inputs and analyses our learner data in addition to giving advice and guidance to new learners.

We currently employ 7 sessional tutors: a sewing tutor (for the sewing beginners and improvers classes), one beauty tutor (for Looking Good Feeling Good), three English tutors (one of them also teaches the wellbeing course), one IT Tutor and ESOL with Maths tutor and 1 online seated yoga tutor. We sadly lost one of our long-standing English Conversation tutors in Dec 2023 as she found new employment, but we are thrilled to be welcoming her back to the Centre again in Autumn 2024. She has a wealth of experience and knowledge in teaching ESOL and supporting learners.

In the summer of 2024, our current creche supervisor, Premalatha Sudarshan sadly handed in her resignation, so that she could spend more time caring for her parents. She has been with the Centre since 2015. She will continue to be a bank crèche worker to support the Centre until we have found a replacement. We also welcomed a new creche worker to the Centre in the summer of 2024, Sumera Rashid who will add invaluable support to the creche team. At present we employ 3 creche workers and will have Premalatha as a bank creche worker.

14. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Despite continuing to keep a tight control over our expenditure during the year, we are reporting a net expenditure in the region of £27,000 for 2023/24 (£57,000 for 2022/23). We have been able to make use of reserves such as the “DCLG 2022-24” funds to meet the shortfall, however this reserve has now been completely used up. See the “Reserves Policy” section below for further details.

The Centre’s income was £198,000 in 2023/24, which is significantly higher than the £151,000 income recorded in 2022/23. Despite this, our costs have also increased to £225,000 in 2023/24 from £208,000 in 2022/23. Most significantly, staff pay has increased due to increased hours worked and pay increases being awarded where appropriate, e.g. in line with National Living Wage levels and to ensure the pay we offer is fair and competitive. The rent for our town centre premises is high, but the learners need to be able to reach the Centre using one bus or walking, as many of them need to pick up their children from school after classes. We continue look for shared, less expensive premises.

While we secured some new funding from National Lottery and Reading Borough Council during Summer 2022, which greatly improved the Centre’s financial security, we are aware of the need to diversify our funding. The current climate in the charitable sector is extremely challenging. However, we have tirelessly worked on funding applications during 2024 so far and we have been successful with some of these.

We are continuing to work to diversify our income into 2024/25 and beyond. Our Business Development Manager, a position paid for by our National Lottery funding, unfortunately left in August 2024, however we are very grateful to have been able to agree an extended period for this project with National Lottery. We have also been able to negotiate a 10% variance on our original grant, which is an enormous help to us.

Income and expenditure figures are monitored monthly against the annual budget and reviewed by the Board at each meeting. We produce detailed cash flow forecasts every month, as we are aware of the importance of closely monitoring our financial position. When contracts are due for review, every effort is made to ensure services are purchased from the most cost-effective source.

Reading Borough Council

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, funding from RBC consisted of two strands of commissioned work under employment and adult social care themes. From November 2022, the basis of our contracts with RBC changed, with two new strands of commissioned work. These have themes of supporting people to get out and stay out of poverty; build resilience, independence and wellbeing; connect people to support; and focus on individual and community strengths. This money has and will continue to provide a valuable base, as it makes a substantial contribution towards our costs.

National Lottery

Funding from National Lottery started in December 2022 and was to continue for two years, although we have recently agreed an extension for some of this funding into summer 2025.

This funding contributes towards the costs of the Centre’s rent, utilities and existing staff. In addition to this, the funds provide for an additional part time Community Outreach Worker, a part time Business Development Manager and a Strategic Consultant.

New Directions

Throughout 2022/23, we maintained our partnership work with New Directions and continued to receive Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) funding from them until July 2023. Our core programme of first steps courses was part funded by New Directions for those learners who met the enrolment eligibility criteria and completed the course.

Other Income

The Centre received other income in the form of room hires and regular donations. We also continue to charge learners a small enrolment fee for each course and for the use of places in the crèche.

Some of our other sources of income received during 2023/24 have been given below:

- Garfield Weston provided unrestricted funding, which went towards salaries.
- Healthwatch provided unrestricted funding, which went towards salaries for staff concerned with supporting learners to express their views.
- A WEA Branch donation provided funds towards English Conversation classes.
- The Multiply Project (funded by Reading Borough Council and New Directions) provided funds for the Everyday Maths courses.
- The Carewell Research project funded the costs of peer researchers.

As in previous years, other funding applications were made but were unsuccessful.

Reserves Policy

The Board has examined the Charity Commission's requirements for reserves in the light of the main risks to the organisation. Originally, the Board had established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible assets would be held to cover three months' running costs, which with the current rent and salary levels now requires an amount of £59,000 to be held. We have been able to reach this level in the General Reserve.

Funds are also being held in designated reserves as follows:

- One has been set up for the designated purpose of staff costs (£15,000). We have been able to keep this at the same level as at 31 March 2023 as the majority of our staff costs are expected to be covered by restricted funds in 2024/25.
- A premises reserve (£19,500) has also been set up to cover premises costs for 2024/25 that are not covered by restricted or other designated funds. This is unchanged since 31 March 2023.
- Finally, when unspent funding from DCLG was moved to unrestricted funds in August 2020, the Board decided to spread this funding over the following three years rather than spend it all during 2021/22. A reserve of £48,000 was set up to reflect the portion of these funds we are planning to spend in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Around half of this was spent during 2022/23, leaving £22,275 at 31 March 2023. The rest of this reserve was spent during 2023/24.

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2024
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the Board of Trustees, as the company directors on 29 October 2024 and signed on the Board's behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Reading Community Learning Centre

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st March 2024

Charity no

1123017

Set out on pages

1-2

**Respective
responsibilities of trustees
and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:


Date: 16th October 2024

Name: Rachel Eden

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

FCMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants)

Address:

Holy Brook Associates, Curious Lounge, 1st Floor, Pinnacle Building,

Tudor Road, Reading, England,

RG1 1NH

Section B

Disclosure

NONE

Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2024
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Statement of Financial Activities
(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM					
Charitable activities	2				
Grants – Core programme		15,000	165,236	180,236	125,521
Grants – Research projects		-	-	-	13,388
4,010 - 4,010 4,008 Courses		4,010	-	4,010	4,008
Total charitable activities		19,010	165,236	184,246	142,917
Donations and legacies		5,652	-	5,652	3,768
Other income	3	7,711	-	7,711	4,263
Total income		32,373	165,236	197,609	150,949
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Building costs		27,693	40,734	68,427	64,719
Office costs		5,955	1,044	6,999	5,439
Programme costs		14,082	40,120	54,202	57,534
Staffing		9,051	85,925	94,976	79,909
Independent examination		504	-	504	480
Total expenditure		57,284	167,823	225,107	208,081
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(24,911)	(2,587)	(27,498)	(57,132)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		119,968	49,799	169,766	226,897
Movements between restricted and unrestricted funds		1,240	(1,240)	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		96,297	45,971	142,268	169,764

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	8	3,871	-	3,871	6,592
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	6,411	5,388	11,799	1,190
Cash at bank		94,073	80,347	174,419	196,554
Total current assets		100,484	85,735	186,218	197,744
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	10	(8,059)	(39,764)	(47,823)	(34,571)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		92,425	45,971	138,396	163,173
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		96,296	45,971	142,267	169,765
NET ASSETS		96,296	45,971	142,267	169,765
FUNDS	12				
Unrestricted funds				96,297	119,968
Restricted funds				45,971	49,797
TOTAL FUNDS				142,268	169,765

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2024 – continued

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 29 October 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP FRS 102 (second edition) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The charity has taken advantage of the disclosure exemptions applicable to smaller charities.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Going Concern

The board of trustees considers that the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate because there are no material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life. In the year of acquisition, depreciation is recorded based on the number of months the asset is in service.

Improvements to property	Straight line over 1 year
Furniture, fixtures & fittings	25% reducing balance
Computer equipment	33% of cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)**Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the board of trustees. Designated funds are unrestricted funds which have been allocated by the Board for particular purposes.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes.

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight-line basis over the period of the lease.

2. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

		2024	2023
		£	£
Grants	Core programme	180,236	125,521
- 13,388 Grants	Research projects	-	13,388
Registration fees	Courses	4,010	3,478
MHFA courses	Courses	-	530
		184,246	142,917

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Reading Borough Council	40,000	38,104
New Directions (NLDC)	6,000	12,000
Multiply Project (RBC and NLDC)	5,607	-
WEA branch donation	5,000	-
Henry Smith	-	10,800
Garfield Weston	10,000	-
National Lottery	108,629	34,412
AB Charitable Trust	-	15,000
Healthwatch Reading	-	10,000
Rotary - Santa Fun Run	2,500	-
Gerald Palmer Eling Trust	2,500	-
CPAR Research Project- 600 Carewell Research	-	600
Project- 12,788 CPAR Research Project	-	-
Carewell Research Project	-	12,788
	180,236	133,705

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

3. OTHER INCOME

	2024	2023
	£	£
Room and facilities hire	5,581	3,648
Gain on disposal of laptops	30	420
Interest income	2,100	195
	<u>7,711</u>	<u>4,263</u>

4. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income / (expenditure) is stated after charging / (crediting):

	2024	2023
	£	£
Depreciation – owned assets	2,860	2,334
Other operating leases	759	825
Accounts and independent examination	504	480
	<u>4,123</u>	<u>3,639</u>

5. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

During the year to 31 March 2024, two of the trustees were paid for work they did outside of their trustee duties.

Simran Aul received £795 (£530 2022/23) for teaching online seated exercises classes during the year. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" Outcome 2.

Raya Mohamed was paid £496 (£504 2022/23) for working in the creche during the year. This was to provide cover for regular creche staff. This was funded by Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" Outcome 1 and Garfield Weston.

During the year to 31 March 2023, Hemamalini Sundharajan was paid a total of £2,066 for her work as an outreach worker (£1,568) and as a researcher (£498). During year to 31 March 2024, Hemamalini resigned from her trustee role in November 2023 in order to take on a paid role as Administrator. There was no overlap between her roles as Trustee and Administrator.

Trustees' expenses

Simran Aul was reimbursed a total of £140 during the year ended 31 March 2024 (£102 2022/23). These expenses cover her monthly Zoom subscriptions, which are required for her to teach online seated exercise classes. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" Outcome 2.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

6. STAFF COSTS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	145,688	128,718
Social security costs	3,403	2,596
Other pension costs	3,090	3,524
	<u>152,181</u>	<u>134,838</u>

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2024	2023
Crèche	3	3
Tutor	7	7
Outreach and Support Worker	2	2
Manager	1	1
Administrator	1	1
	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>

No member of staff was paid more than £60,000 in the year.

Key management personnel

The charity considers its key management personnel to comprise the trustees and Aisha Malik, the office manager.

7. FUNDING FROM DCLG CONTROLLING MIGRATION

During the year 2020/21, the charity received a grant of £38,340 from DCLG Controlling Migration and also had carried forward grant of £45,252 from 2019/20. Some of this funding was used towards the running costs of the Centre during 2020/21, however it was clear that there would be an underspend of this grant. It was confirmed in August 2020 that the remaining grant could be transferred to unrestricted funds and used towards the running costs of the Centre.

£48,000 of the DCLG underspend was put in a designated reserve titled "DCLG (2022-24)" and this reserve was used towards the Centre's running costs for years 2022/23 and 2023/24. As at 31 March 2024, this reserve has been fully spent.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Improvements to property £	Furniture, fixtures & fittings £	Computer & other equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2023	9,224	4,919	12,576	26,719
Additions	-	139	-	139
Disposals	-	(48)	-	(48)
At 31 March 2024	9,224	5,010	12,576	26,810
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2023	9,224	3,610	7,293	20,127
Disposals	-	(48)	-	(48)
Charge for year	-	331	2,529	2,860
At 31 March 2024	9,224	3,892	9,823	22,939
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2024	-	1,118	2,753	3,871
At 31 March 2023	-	1,310	5,283	6,592

9. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	456	698
11,343 491 Prepayments	11,343	491
	11,799	1,190

10. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE TO WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Social security and other taxes	1,699	1,919
Other creditors	14,664	12,481
Deferred Income	29,337	18,608
Accrued expenses	2,123	1,563
	47,823	34,571

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

11. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Within one year	39,600	39,600
Between one and five years	72,600	112,200
	<u>112,200</u>	<u>151,800</u>

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 01/04/2023	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2024
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	7,193	(3,454)	(942)	2,797
General Reserve	56,000	-	3,000	59,000
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	15,000	-	-	15,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	19,500	-	-	19,500
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2024-24)	22,275	(21,457)	(817)	-
	<u>119,968</u>	<u>(24,911)</u>	<u>1,240</u>	<u>96,297</u>
Restricted funds				
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	5,197	(5,197)	-	-
111111RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	11,769	(10,770)	(999)	-
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 1	(3,018)	1,430	-	(1,589)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 2	5,013	1,458	-	6,472
RBC and New Directions – Multiply Project	1,481	(2,498)	-	(1,017)
National Lottery	6,235	33,486	-	39,721
1Healthwatch	10,000	(10,000)	-	-
Carewell Research Project	11,850	(9,467)	-	2,384
MHFA courses	1,270	(1,029)	(241)	-
WEA branch donation	-	-	-	-
	<u>49,798</u>	<u>(2,587)</u>	<u>(1,240)</u>	<u>45,971</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>169,766</u>	<u>(27,498)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>142,268</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

The movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	32,373	(35,827)	(3,454)
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	-	(21,457)	(21,457)
	32,373	(57,284)	(24,911)
Restricted funds			
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	6,000	(11,197)	(5,197)
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	-	(10,770)	(10,770)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 1	25,000	(23,570)	1,430
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 2	15,000	(13,542)	1,458
RBC and New Directions – Multiply Project	5,607	(8,105)	(2,498)
National Lottery	108,629	(75,143)	33,486
Healthwatch	-	(10,000)	(10,000)
Carewell Research Project	-	(9,467)	(9,467)
MHFA courses	-	(1,029)	(1,029)
WEA branch donation 5,000 (5,000)-	5,000	(5,000)	-
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities 6,000 (11,197) (5,197) RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)- (10,770) (10,770) RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 1 25,000 (23,570) 1,430 RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 2 15,000 (13,542) 1,458 RBC and New Directions – Multiply Project 5,607 (8,105) (2,498) WEA branch donation	165,236	(167,823)	(2,587)
TOTAL FUNDS	197,609	(225,107)	(27,498)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued**2022/23 Comparatives for movement in funds**

	At 01/04/2022	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2023
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	12,511	(23,880)	18,562	7,193
General Reserve	55,000	-	1,000	56,000
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	33,000	-	(18,000)	15,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	19,500	-	-	19,500
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	48,000	(25,725)	-	22,275
	168,011	(49,606)	1,562	119,968
Restricted funds				
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	-	5,197	-	5,197
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	11,331	(10,849)	(482)	-
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	29,260	(17,339)	(151)	11,769
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 1	-	(3,018)	-	(3,018)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 2	-	5,013	-	5,013
RBC and New Directions – Multiply Project	-	1,481	-	1,481
National Lottery	-	6,235	-	6,235
Henry Smith	5,145	(5,144)	-	-
Earley Charity	1,773	(1,773)	-	-
BWCCG and RVA grants	3,971	(3,571)	(400)	-
Compass Recovery College	-	-	-	-
Jelly Arts	-	-	-	-
Healthwatch	-	10,000	-	10,000
CPAR Research Project	315	214	(529)	-
Carewell Research Project	3,721	8,129	-	11,850
MHFA courses	3,370	(2,100)	-	1,270
	58,886	(7,526)	(1,562)	49,798
TOTAL FUNDS	226,898	(57,132)	-	169,766

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

2022/23 comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	27,110	(50,990)	(23,880)
Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)	-	(25,725)	(25,725)
	27,110	(76,715)	(49,606)
Restricted funds			
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	12,000	(6,803)	5,197
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	13,709	(24,558)	(10,849)
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	7,729	(25,068)	(17,339)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 1	10,417	(13,435)	(3,018)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 2	6,250	(1,237)	5,013
RBC and New Directions – Multiply Project	2,804	(1,323)	1,481
National Lottery	34,412	(28,178)	6,235
Henry Smith	10,800	(15,944)	(5,144)
Earley Charity	-	(1,773)	(1,773)
CWCCG and RVA grants	-	(3,571)	(3,571)
Compass Recovery College	1,000	(1,000)	-
Jelly Arts	800	(800)	-
Healthwatch	10,000	-	10,000
CPAR Research Project	600	(386)	214
Carewell Research Project	12,788	(4,659)	8,129
MHFA courses	530	(2,631)	(2,100)
	123,839	(131,365)	(7,526)
TOTAL FUNDS	150,949	(208,081)	(57,132)

There were a number of transfers between funds during the year. All were approved by the trustees and, where appropriate, the funder. More details are given below.

General Reserve

The Board has set aside £59,000 in order to cover three months' working capital requirements and three months' rent payments. This is in line with the Centre's reserving policy.

Designated Reserve (Staffing)

An amount of £15,000 has been set aside from the General Fund to cover future staffing costs. We have been able to keep this reserve at the same level as at 31 March 2023 as the majority of our staff salaries are covered by restricted funds.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued**Designated Reserve (Premises)**

An amount of £19,500 has been put aside to cover general premises costs for 2024/25 that are not covered by restricted funds. We have been able to keep this reserve at the same level as at 31 March 2023 as the majority of our rent (the most significant building cost) is covered by restricted funds.

Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)

During the year to 31 March 2021 we were allowed to take underspent restricted funds of around £62,500 from DCLG into unrestricted funds, with the permission of DCLG. The Board decided to spread this unrestricted funding over a number of years rather than spend it all during 2021/22. A designated reserve of £48,000 called "DCLG 2022-24" was set up to use during financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. We finished using this reserve in 2023/24 as planned.

13. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There are no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2024.

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

England & Wales - Charity number 1123017

Accounts

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2023
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD**CONTENTS**

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1. CHARITY INFORMATION

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities', effective 1 January 2019.

The Trustees have complied with the duty in section 17(5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance.

Reference and administrative details

Registered Company number
6442616 (England and Wales)

Registered Charity number
1123017

Registered office
94 London Street
Reading RG1 4SJ

Trustees

Clare Furneaux
Hemamalini Sundararajan
Jennifer Theron
Karen Rowland
Katharine Sarah del Tufo
Linda Smith
Lucy England
Parveen Brar - staff representative
Raya Mohamed
Rosie Chambers
Shahanaz Uddin - resigned 6/6/2022
Simran Aul
Aydan Gasimova

Company Secretary

Aisha Malik (Centre Manager)

Independent examiner

Holy Brook Associates

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

Reading Community Learning Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated and registered as a charity. The company was incorporated on 3 December 2007 and registered as a charity on 29 February 2008 under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and it is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up its members are required to contribute a sum not exceeding £10 towards any outstanding debts.

The Board of Directors

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charitable law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles, one third of the directors must retire from office each year but can offer themselves up for re-election at the Annual General Meeting.

Board members provide a wide range of financial, HR, life experience and business and management skills. Board meetings are held at approximately six weekly intervals, currently using Zoom. We hope to have more face-to face meetings in 2023/2024. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction and policies of the organisation. Sub-groups have been formed to take forward the work on human resources (HR), learner engagement, and fundraising. The Centre Manager and a Tutor representative attend Board meetings in an advisory capacity. Day to day responsibility for the running of the organisation and the provision of services is delegated to the Centre Manager under the direction of the Board.

Recruitment, appointment, and induction of trustees

When an individual is being considered as a potential new Board member they are first invited to a meeting with the Chair and Centre Manager where the work of the organisation and the contribution of the trustees is discussed. If there is mutual agreement that the applicant should continue with their application, they will be provided with appropriate written information about the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of trustees, and they may be invited to provide a CV, and attend a Board meeting as an observer. Their application will be discussed by the trustees and if appropriate they will be formally invited to join the Board. Further induction and training will be organised on an individual basis according to the specific needs of the appointee. Trustee packs are given to all new Trustees.

Members

Reading Community Learning Centre is a membership organisation. There are currently 59 members, mainly longstanding supporters of the work of the Centre. Reading Community Learning Centre's Board is accountable to its members for the operation of the organisation in line with its stated objectives. Members receive a report on the Centre's work and progress at least annually, and they are eligible to vote at general meetings of the organisation.

Risk management

The Directors have a responsibility to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to manage the finances effectively and guard against fraud. A number of measures and protocols have been established which aim to safeguard the finances of the Centre and to provide satisfactory systems in all areas of work which expose the charity to risk. The Board of Directors has continued to take a conservative approach to financial decisions during this year of the charity's life and has aimed to establish an appropriate reserve of funds as advised by the Charity Commission. A full risk register is maintained and reviewed at Board Meetings and staff are regularly reminded of the operational risks. Since early March 2020, the Centre Manager has developed an additional Covid-19 Risk register and set of protocols.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

The Centre's objectives are, for the benefit of the public in the Reading area:

1. The relief of poverty and the needs of those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, in particular women and children and those from minority ethnic communities. This is done, for example, by:
 - a. providing general education and training, including language skills and other basic skills, to advance them in life and/or assist them to adapt within a new community; and
 - b. providing or assisting them in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, financial hardship or social circumstances with the objects of improving their conditions of life and relieving the effects of isolation.
2. To promote racial and religious harmony and raise awareness about, and to promote good relations between, persons of different racial and religious groups.
3. To advance the education of the public about issues relating to migrants, those seeking asylum and/or granted refugee status to help promote knowledge, mutual understanding and mutual and good relations between them.
4. To relieve financial hardship among people living or working in the Reading area by providing information, advice and support.

The Board has referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

Vision

Marginalised ethnic minority women in Reading achieving their individual hopes and fulfilling their aspirations.

Mission

Reading Community Learning Centre:

- offers marginalised ethnic minority women opportunities for social, educational, integration, and volunteering activities;
- provides services that address barriers to learning;
- supports progression into further education, social and employment opportunities; and
- encourages these women to raise their issues and concerns and engage with agencies.

Aims

Reading Community Learning Centre aims to enable marginalised ethnic minority women to be skilled, confident active citizens who contribute to society.

Overall objectives

1. To provide safe, first step educational opportunities for excluded ethnic minority women- for example:
 - building their confidence and independence;
 - developing language skills;
 - pre-employment skills; and
 - getting them started on journeys towards further education and employment.
2. To support the progression of ethnic minority women onto further education, volunteering or work activities for example:
 - working with other organisations to ensure a clear pathway into further education;

- providing supported volunteering opportunities in the Centre and access volunteering opportunities in other organisations;
 - working with employers; and
 - supporting the development of internal social enterprise within RCLC.
3. Through outreach and research work in communities, engage women who face cultural, religious and social barriers in learning and integration.
 4. To provide holistic women-centred support and advice that focuses on each women's individual needs. This will remove barriers to learning, integration and employment and support progression- for example:
 - free classes at convenient times during school hours
 - access to a free crèche
 - referral onto other organisations
 - help with filling in forms
 - advising how to access services; and
 - Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on educational and employment progression.
 5. To break down barriers between people from different cultures and to foster mutual support, respect, understanding and friendship. This will contribute to integration and community cohesion.
 6. To provide opportunities for learners to influence the work and direction of the Centre. To allow learners to voice their issues and concerns to external agencies on issues that affect their lives- for example, learner forums, local consultations for health, police and other agencies.
 7. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built in support at the Centre, as well as recruiting host community volunteers, supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression. This will support learning, friendship, and integration.
 8. To work with marginalised ethnic minority men alongside women when culturally appropriate or a particular need is identified.
 9. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2022-2023

The Board's plans for next year are outlined below;

Our 1-Year Strategic Plan

1. We will build financial resilience and continue to diversify funding.
The lasting financial impact of COVID-19 has heavily impacted the charity sector and our ability to generate income so we will need to be more creative than ever in raising funds that we need to deliver our vital work. We will:
 - a. continue to maintain tight control over expenditure throughout 2022/23;
 - b. recruit a part-time business development manager to diversify our funding and promote the Centre's work;
 - c. seek to agree our rental costs with our new landlord to enable us to budget effectively
 - d. build a new strategic vision for 2023-2025 to continue to grow the organisation.
2. We will respond to the urgent need to address isolation and focus on the mental health needs of learners. The COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on ethnic minority migrant and refugee women already experiencing isolation and loneliness. We will address this by providing mental health support and we will:
 - a. recruit one dedicated social prescriber and outreach worker who is mental health first aid trained.

3. To build closer collaboration with partner organisations to help the women we support recover from the crisis. We will:
 - a. Continue to connect and engage with our partner organisations
 - b. Ensure women are referred directly to partner organisations who can provide them with the support they need.
4. We will find the women who are most often invisible to other services and denied the support they need by offering them advice and signposting to other services. This has only been exacerbated by the lasting impact of the pandemic. We will therefore:
 - a. strengthen our existing outreach activity
 - b. recruit one new outreach worker to spread the word of our services at this critical time.
5. To continue to strengthen the Board of Trustees and recruit, if possible, an ethnic minority woman to the role of Chair.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2023-25

1. To recruit a consultant to coordinate an organisational review in Autumn 2023. This will support the strategic growth of the charity and enable us to provide the best support we can for learners.
2. To work with the newly-appointed Business Development Manager to raise funding and continue to diversify funding incomes, including:
 - a. income generation from the building
 - b. to strengthen the fundraising capacity of the Centre with a focus on strengthening the management resources and
 - c. seeking stable core funding, building on the work of the business development manager.
3. To provide a core programme for a minimum of 270 learners pa, involving recruitment, assessment, delivery, Information Advice and Guidance, signposting, and well-being support to learners and others approaching the Centre for support.
4. To help to overcome isolation by creating a space for women to access information, advice and support, and build friendships, confidence and resilience.
5. To provide mental health support, awareness and referrals to partners and courses at the Centre. To put the women we work with at the heart of what we do by encouraging learners to influence and contribute to the work and direction of the Centre. We aim to do this through participation in the Trustee Board, as volunteers and through learner voice groups. We will also continue to monitor and evaluate our services to continually improve and evolve our services for learners.
6. To continue promoting and raising awareness of women's issues and rights, that are pertinent to the empowerment of migrant and refugee women who use the Centre. To embed these within the existing courses and maintain links with relevant healthcare organisations and social prescribers in light of the increased demand for support work resulting from the pandemic.
7. To further improve and strengthen the marketing and communication of the Centre as a source of support, advice, and signposting to learners, and other communities and organisations, building on increased awareness of the needs of migrant and refugee ethnic minority women.
8. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built-in support at the Centre. Supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression.

9. To continue to recruit community volunteers and develop integration opportunities with host community members and groups.
10. To increase cultural awareness and promote friendships creating bilateral benefits for the learners and the community volunteers who support them.
11. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory, and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners.

4. THE WORK OF THE CENTRE

Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) exists to help marginalised women from ethnic minority backgrounds to achieve their individual potential. The majority of the women we support are migrants, refugees or asylum seekers who speak little or no English, and often have limited contact outside of the home. No matter what barriers a woman faces we work alongside her as she overcomes obstacles to realising her aspirations. For many women, this includes improving their English, volunteering locally, gaining qualifications or securing a job.

Based in central Reading, we offer a programme of outreach activities, training classes, workshops and social opportunities at our Centre. These are designed to build confidence, increase skills and reduce the social isolation of local ethnic minority women, many of whom are amongst the most isolated, deprived and vulnerable in our community. In 2022/2023, we ran classes for 420 women from 36 different countries. A total of 874 women were supported with information, advice and guidance (IAG) with support varying from benefit support, filling in forms, making telephone calls, translation support to accompanying them to access services at the Centre from April 2022- Mar 2023. Out of these women 48% were not RCLC learners and had been referred to us from friends, neighbours or other organisations and our partners.

Reading Community Learning Centre provides informal education and support for women who are unable to access more mainstream services because of the educational, social or cultural barriers they face. Some of the women who come to the Centre have had little access to formal education, most do not speak English, and sometimes they are not literate in their own language. Almost all the migrant and refugee learners face cultural and other challenges, and for some the Centre offers their only contact outside their immediate family. Many of the refugees and asylum seekers are living with children in poor hotels. The Centre's unique success has been in making learning accessible to the hardest to reach learners through a community-based approach, built on gaining the trust of often isolated communities and designing courses and services to meet their needs.

RCLC's educational provision creates ways into education for the most tentative and least confident of learners. Women with very limited language and literacy skills can take their first steps into learning here, and women who have gained qualifications in their countries of birth can access support to develop their English skills. This may mean coming to a social activity, joining an English conversation class or learning English through one of several practical creative classes. Learners are drawn from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The development of cross-cultural friendships is one of the most important benefits for many RCLC learners. Our model encourages community cohesion, breaks down barriers between cultures, and fosters mutual respect amongst the women. No other service in Reading reaches such a diverse group of women, giving us a unique insight into the needs of local ethnic minority communities.

Since the pandemic, supporting women around their mental health issues has become increasingly important and will remain a key focus.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES FROM APRIL 2022

Thanks to grants and contracts from the organisations listed below, we have been able to run a sustained programme of activities throughout the year, for which the trustees are very grateful:

- Reading Borough Council
- NLDC Grant from New Directions
- The National Lottery
- The DCLG Controlling Migration Grant
- The Henry Smith Charity
- Multiply Project Funding (Funded by New Directions)
- The AB Charitable Trust
- Public Health England for the CPAR Project
- The National Academy for Social Prescribing's 'Thriving Communities' fund (Wildbeing Project)

- The Earley Charity
- University of Reading (CareWell Research Project) and
- Rental income from WEA and New Directions

From April 2022 all of our core programme of classes were taught face to face and the creche was fully open from Monday to Friday essentially doubling our provision from the previous year due to increased demand to catch up on the waiting lists from the previous year. This face-to-face contact was vital as many ethnic minority women were isolated and vulnerable over the lockdown period.

RCLC continue to adhere to the government Covid guidelines and has a risk register in place. We no longer need to socially distance ourselves or wear masks but there is hand gel in every room, windows are kept open, and all staff took weekly Covid tests. We taught the learners at the Centre not only how to order the test kits but how to use them if they needed them. However, from April 2022 the government stopped giving free test kits so RCLC bought them for the staff but could no longer give any to the learners.

Actions taken to incorporate safe teaching, learning and support at RCLC from April 2022:

1. All learners were enrolled face to face and were given a detailed induction on health and safety, the current Covid-19 protocols, and where to get support if they had symptoms of Covid-19.
2. At the start of each term, all tutors had a training session, received the Covid-19 risk register training with revised Covid regulations and the online teaching guidelines training for RCLC. All staff were given Covid test kits and face masks if they still wished to wear them.
3. All enrolled learners were set up with their class WhatsApp group to learn, post homework, use to connect with the tutor and stay in touch with friends from the class.
4. RCLC stayed in contact with the elderly female learners from the Pakistani Community Centre (PCC), and the elderly Nepalese ladies who were enrolled on our ESOL Skills for Health Courses at the Warehouse. Friendly phone chats were arranged once a week to support them to reduce loneliness and isolation. These calls provided the latest health information regarding the pandemic and in supporting them to access the services they needed as they were on the shielding list and housebound. Our very popular online seated yoga course for the elderly learners from the PCC and Indian Community Association continued throughout the year with learners commenting on how much easier it was for them as they did not need to worry about travelling by bus yet still meet friends and do exercise safely in their own home.

Increased support needs

RCLC continues to experience an increase in demand as we support women and their families through the pandemic. Many have experienced disproportionate challenges and difficulties around mental and physical health, loss of finance, social isolation and domestic abuse - compounded by language barriers and racism. Covid-19 has further exposed some of the health and wider inequalities that persist in our society. The virus itself had a disproportionate impact on certain sections of the population, including those living in most deprived neighbourhoods and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

There is emerging evidence that the pandemic has increased Ethnic minority women's mental health support needs along with increased domestic abuse. Just under four in ten (36%) adults in Britain reported that during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown they have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety. Two in ten (21%) said that they have been finding lockdown difficult to cope with, while 14% said that social isolation was making 'relationships at home more difficult than usual'. This last figure rose to 19% for BME groups. A recent Red Cross Report identifies that following lockdown the situation has worsened for Ethnic minority people. Runnymede Trust report that in their survey over a third of Ethnic minority people (36%) have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety during the coronavirus crisis, with one out of five struggling with social isolation.

Cost of Living Crisis

There is now increasing evidence about the levels of hidden poverty in the migrant and refugee communities, especially amongst Muslim communities, who make up around 60% of our learners. Many of the women we work with cannot access employment, and live in, or at risk of, poverty as a result, especially in the current crisis. For some this is a result of language, low skills, religious or cultural barriers, or due to caring responsibilities, a lack of flexible job opportunities, and low levels of confidence, skills, how they can access services to help improve their life chances and hence many live in, or at risk of, poverty as a result and work experience.

70% of the learners on our programmes; state they want to work. Gaining confidence, English language skills, an understanding of the job market and basic tools to navigate the world of work (CVs, how to complete an application, where to look for work), and supported volunteering, are therefore essential ways of tackling unemployment, poverty, and health inequalities. RCLC is part of a 7-organisation contract with Reading Borough Council to tackle poverty, discrimination and disadvantage and promote wellbeing, working in a formal delivery partnership with Refugee Support Group, Communicare, Reading Welfare Rights, Starting Point, Churches in Reading Drop In Centre, Christian Community Action and Readifood. A weekly benefits advisor from Communicare visits the Centre, seeing women on a 1:1 basis. Other than a small registration fee, all of our classes and activities are free of charge, and we know that this helps to increase accessibility as many have no recourse to public funds, 24% of the women are on benefits and 91% of them are unemployed.

Our research on the needs of ethnic minority women in Reading, in partnership with Reading University (2018), reinforced other local and national research into the barriers faced by refugee, migrant and ethnic minority women to achieving their potential and integrating into the community. The research found that limited English language skills impact upon migrant women's ability to integrate with the community around them, further compounding their sense of isolation, impairing their ability to gain employment and reducing their sense of well-being.

Together, with the cost of living, our organisational costs have gone up including the rent and utilities. The crisis is bringing to us women who are seeking help but have not had contact with other agencies and at least initially are not looking for classes. This requires support time from all our staff, including time to actively signpost to other agencies. This often involves staff or volunteers accompanying to support and interpret.

The crisis has had significant effect on our staff, all of whom are paid at Living Wage rates or above. Because of cost-of-living problems they are experiencing the Board has reviewed staff salaries and also made an additional one-off payment to all staff in 2022/2023. Unlike most charities in the town, we have managed to retain our staff. Our ex-teacher volunteers are on pensions and relatively financially secure, but the learner volunteers are in the same serious situation as all our learners.

There is considerable fearfulness at acknowledging financial issues like debt and lack of finance for food, utilities rent etc. There is limited history of using food banks though the mosques and other local charities are helping.

Of the 420 women we supported with classes in 2022/2023: a third of our learners came from the 10% most deprived wards in Reading, 91% were unemployed and 24% of our learners are on benefits. However, it is important to remember acknowledge that 32% of our learners were asylum seekers and refugees who could not work and were ineligible to claim benefits due to their immigration status, so in reality the percentage on benefits should be much higher.

All these factors are further compounded by the fact that the vast majority of the women we support even if they were highly educated or if their families and husbands have money are not free to spend money on themselves to pay for travel to courses, work or volunteering, on clothes, or food for themselves. The family budget has been considerably reduced during the cost-of-living crisis has meant that there is less money than ever in the household budget for the women in the family.

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 06442616 (England and Wales)

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1123017

As the cost-of-living soars we are running double the number of creche sessions and classes pre-pandemic but are still struggling to keep up with demand and increasing waiting lists. Our experienced and qualified BAME staff team with lived experience must be paid at a rate where we can retain them as they will not be able to work if their cost-of-living needs are not met. Termly learner evaluation feedback from our learners confirms that the women only, free classes and creche in a friendly local setting for women are one of the many reasons they come to the centre to learn. Engagement and early intervention with the vulnerable women we support is a key strategy in breaking this cycle of poverty, unemployment, despondency, and declining mental health exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

5. COURSE PROGRAMME

Core Programmes run in 2022 - 2023

In the academic year 2022/2023, 420 (an increase of 14% since last year) women completed our core programmes which for the first time since the pandemic were all taught face to face at RCLC.

Summer 2022

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners
- English Reading and Writing Improvers
- Sewing Beginners, And Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good Improvers
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly Nepali Women taught at the Warehouse)
- Gardening Workshops at the Museum for English Rural Life (MERL)
- Wellbeing Workshops in partnership with Compass Recovery College:
 - Understanding Mental Health Challenges
 - Five Ways to Wellbeing
 - Being Kinder to Yourself
 - Yoga for Self- Care

Autumn 2022

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners
- English Reading and Writing Improvers
- Sewing Beginners, And Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good Beginners
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly Nepali Women taught at the Warehouse)
- Mental and Physical Wellbeing Course
- Making Quilts in partnership with Jelly Arts

Spring 2023

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners
- English Reading and Writing Improvers
- Sewing Beginners, And Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good Beginners
- Beginners IT
- ESOL Skills for Health (for elderly Nepali Women taught at the Warehouse)
- Mental and Physical Wellbeing Course
- ESOL for Everyday Maths

Alongside our core programme of classes, we also ran;

- a free arts and crafts course in partnership with Jelly Arts (with funding received from RBC Small Grants) where 7 learners produced beautiful quilts reflecting fabrics and colours from their culture;
- a free gardening course at the Museum for English Rural Life for 11 learners and an ESOL with Maths class funded by New Directions (Multiply Project) for 6 learners.

These courses enabled RCLC to provide not only a more diverse range of classes but also more opportunities for our learners to engage in courses outside the centre as many went on to progress onto the Museum for English Rural Life courses for babies and mums and arts and crafts courses at Jelly Arts. These new classes for migrant and refugee ethnic minority women who would not have the means, knowledge or accessibility to any wellbeing, arts or gardening activities outside of their homes also hugely benefitted their mental health.

Supporting Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian Refugees

- The Centre has worked closely with the Refugee Support Group (RSG) in helping the families, especially the women, access ESOL classes and community resources. A representative from the Centre regularly attended the Reading Borough Council Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme Case Management Group. Although these meetings no longer take place, we still support the refugees and refer our clients as we have a new Closing the Gap Partnership (CTG), funded by RBC.
- RCLC has also regularly attended the Afghan Resettlement Scheme Case Management meetings (ARAP) led by RBC which started in the summer of 2021 following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan in April 2021. Working in partnership with other members on the board we support Afghan women to access the ESOL Classes, 1:1 outreach support and translation support at the Centre.
- Since autumn 2021 we have seen a steep increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers enrolled on courses at the Centre reflecting the global migration trends but also because we have received more referrals from partners such as RRSB and Care 4 Calais. As these women have no recourse to public funding, they cannot access any support from the accredited learning providers in Reading but can from RCLC.
- Sadly, as Russia declared war on Ukraine in 2022, we started to see our first Ukrainian refugees at the Centre in the summer of 2022. However as Ukrainian refugees can access publicly funded courses, healthcare and other support services we have seen far fewer Ukrainian nationals come to the Centre. This is reflected in our data with around 4% of our learners coming from the Ukraine. We are continuing to work in partnership with the Council to support any Ukrainian refugee women who need our support.
- By the end of the summer term 2023, around 32% of the learners were asylum seekers and refugees. This is an 8% drop in comparison to this time last year when the percentage was 40%. The vast majority of the new arrivals to our Centre in the last two terms have been from the Eritrea, Hong Kong and Afghanistan.

The statistics below give a breakdown of the number of refugees and asylum seekers who studies on the core programmes at RCLC and which country they came from over the academic year 2022/2023

Refugees (total number over 2022/2023 = 42)		Asylum Seekers (total number over 2022/2023 = 93)	
Afghanistan	18	Afghanistan	8
Ethiopia	4	Albania	4
Pakistan	4	Bangladesh	6
Sudan	1	El Salvador	9
Syria	3	Iraq	5
Ukraine	12	Iran	2
		Namibia	2
		Nepal	4
		Pakistan	6
		Sri Lanka	1
		Sudan	1
		Ukraine	6

Improving citizen engagement – learners engaging with agencies about issues that affect their lives

803 learners (an increase of 50% from last year) attended the information sessions at RCLC with guest speakers over the three terms or were supported on enrichment activities as well as outreach sessions outside the Centre. Guest speakers are invited to the Centre so that women have the opportunity to engage and access important information in a safe and private environment. The guest speakers are broadly categorised into terms which are themed on women's health, accessing local services or are linked to women's rights and safety. This year we ran the following sessions and trips;

Autumn 2022

- 48 women attended information session from Maternity Services giving their feedback and experience of using these services
- 30 women attended information sessions given by Lara from Compass Recovery College about their wellbeing and mental health courses and how to enrol onto them
- 15 women from the pre-entry class visited the Museum for English Rural Life as part of their learning and enrichment activity
- 40 women received information sessions from Rosalind (Adviza careers advice)
- 30 women received information from Rhiannon (Reading Voluntary Action) who spoke about Chat Connect Befriend- how learners could think about becoming befrienders for people in the community. RCLC are hoping to grow the number of women who could take part in this as there is a shortage of befriending volunteers from ethnic minority backgrounds in Reading.
- 35 women attended the RCLC Health Day in Nov 2022. A variety of health information stalls which included dementia information, carer support information, diabetes, coping with pain, stroke, weight loss, respiratory and TB service, sexual health and others were at RCLC. Whilst women waited to be seen by a nurse, they were treated to free health massages in the waiting area. The three health nurses were at the Centre to complete BMI, Blood pressure and diabetes checks on the women. This successful health day will be running again in Nov 2023.

Spring 2023

- Thanks to our partnership with CommuniCare through the RBC Closing the Gap, Lynn from CommuniCare joined the RCLC team to give benefit and advice sessions every Tuesday from 10-12pm during time. At the start of each term Lynn, and our outreach workers promote this service so that learners can access this vital support. Since Lynn joined, she has helped women with divorce information and applications, provided legal advice through the CommuniCare legal clinic, ongoing help with the applications, housing advice, help with Homechoice Bidding, fuel vouchers, child benefit, disability benefit and universal credit. Most of the women are those who need regular and extensive support due to the language barriers.
- 100 women received information regarding Readifood's food parcels, New Beginnings and First Days Charities (who provide school uniforms) and Whitley CDA who have a school uniform and surplus food pop up on Thursdays as part of our cost-of-living theme for the term.
- 20 women attended the session delivered by Anita Donovan from Southern Electricity to talk about how learners could make savings on their fuel costs by making changes to how they use appliances at home
- 7 women were interviewed by RBC Maternity services at RCLC with translation support provided by RCLC on their experiences of accessing pre pregnancy and post pregnancy care.
- 40 learners celebrated International Women's Day at RCLC. Learners and staff brought in food to share together, and certificates were given to learners who have shown outstanding achievement with a box of chocolates.
- RCLC started a new partnership with the Salama Project (Challenging hidden domestic abuse within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities through informal chai and chat) running Chai and Chat sessions twice per term at the centre. Our first Chai and Chat at the centre held at the end of Mar 2023. was really busy, with 20 ladies attending from RCLC and Alana House.
- 40 women received information sessions from Rosalind (Adviza careers advice)

Summer 2023

- 65 women received information about the local elections and how they could vote. Those who were not able to vote were given support by Shaheen on how to register if they were eligible
- Lynn promoted the CommuniCare advice surgeries to all the new learners in the summer term.
- 100 women received information regarding Readifood's food parcels, New Beginnings and First Days Charities (who provide school uniforms) and Whitley CDA who have a school uniform and surplus food pop up on Thursdays as part of our cost-of-living theme for the term.
- 55 women attended information sessions delivered by Jess Wood (Assistant Psychologist) from Brighter Futures for Children (RBC) informing learner on how to access support for children and young people with emerging, mild or moderate mental health difficulties that may be affecting day to day life.
- 15 learners from the beginners reading and writing class visited the Museum of English Rural Life as part of their learning and enrichment activity
- In the summer of 2018 RCLC started a wonderful friendship between the volunteers who ran the Swallowfield Coffee Club and RCLC. This arose when the Coffee Club decided to donate the proceeds of their summer 2018 quarter to RCLC. RCLC in return, invited the volunteers to visit RCLC to thank them for their very generous gift, offering tea, Asian sweets and treats. The experience for the volunteers from Swallowfield and the ladies of RCLC to meet new people, share stories, cultures and food was a very moving one and something we knew we must continue as it helped learners to meet English speaking women as well as practice their English. They also got a chance to see rural life in Swallowfield. Due to the pandemic this had to stop but this year in the summer we were able to visit Swallowfield again and in return the volunteers from the village came to our end of term celebrations in July which we held at the Museum of English Rural Life Gardens. Eight learners from the English Conversation class, two staff and 1 volunteer visited Swallowfield Village Coffee Club
- 15 learners attended the Reading Green Wellbeing Session on how nature and gardening can really help to improve mental health
- 30 women received information sessions from Rosalind (Adviza careers advice)
- In partnership with the Holt Secondary School, two year 10 students completed their one week work experience. They received a range of work experience from the classroom, to the creche and also in the office. They particularly enjoyed supporting the women in the classes.
- 45 women attended the summer Chai and Chat sessions in May and June 2023

Mental Health First Aid Courses (MHFA)

In response to the growing need for MHFA courses in Reading during and since the pandemic, RCLC were requested by RBC to run online MHFA Courses over a 2 year period from Mar 2021 for the voluntary, faith-based organisations and statutory sector staff across Reading, Slough, Wokingham, West Berkshire, and Bracknell who were supporting vulnerable men and women in financial crisis over the pandemic. We were given funding from RBC twice following our successful delivery so by the end of July 2022 we had taught MHFA Courses to 122 men and women. In January this year we taught one MHFA Course to 4 men and women. We have a little bit of funding left which we will use to deliver a face-to-face course in Autumn 2023.

The advantage of teaching the courses online has meant that RCLC was able to engage with many people across a large area and the course was accessible to those who struggled to travel due to the pandemic guidelines, mental health or physical needs.

6. ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Centre continues to collect evidence of its outputs and outcomes through:

- Enrolment forms and attendance records of people attending. These forms record the diversity of people participating in learning opportunities, retention and achievement. We also record data onto an educational management information system database.
- Tracking of progression into further learning, volunteering and work.
- Evidence of outcomes and progression through feedback forms, records of course reviews, regular 1:1 interviews completed by the staff, students and trustees using volunteers as interpreters as required.
- Case studies and individual learning records and diaries of individual learning journeys and evidencing the impact of engagement in informal learning.
- For the children in the crèche: enrolment forms and attendance records, termly reviews, feedback from parents and individual learning journeys for the children.

Learner Statistics

420 learners enrolled on our core programme of courses at RCLC 2022/2023

- 98% of our core programme learners have no UK qualifications or are at an entry level in ESOL
- 20% of learners have a degree or higher from their home country
- 91% of our learners are unemployed
- 24% of our learners are on benefits (it is important to remember that 32% of our learners were asylum seekers and refugees who could not work and were ineligible to claim benefits due to their immigration status so in reality this percentage should be much higher)
- 5% of our learners are retired
- 8% of our learner's work part-time or full-time
- 17% of our learners use the crèche, a lifeline for those who cannot afford childcare costs
- 29% of our learners are aged 31-40; 27% are 51 plus; 25% are aged 19-30; 20% are aged 41-50.
- 10% of our learners are refugees and 22% are asylum seekers, whilst 58% of the learners had not been living in the UK for more than 3 years. This year's figures are broadly similar to last years.
- 15% of learners disclosed that they needed additional support. Of this 15%, 46% of the women declared they had additional social and emotional difficulties and 35% had mental health difficulties.
- 4% of the learners progressed into full-time or part-time employment and 3% onto volunteering. These figures are slightly less than last year but this year the vast majority of our learners had no qualifications or experience of working in their home country. It will therefore take them longer to progress onto volunteering or employment. This is also exacerbated by the fact that there are large sectors of the economy which were badly affected by the pandemic and the lockdown (people were furloughed, made redundant or left without any employment. The continued cost of living crisis is also making it harder for women to get into employment due to travel costs and childcare.
- 75% of our learners progressed onto internal courses at RCLC
- 11% of our learners progressed onto accredited courses with the WEA, Reading College or New Directions (this is nearly double the figure from last year) whilst 7% progressed onto other courses in the community.

- This year learners came from an amazing 36 different countries with the majority from the following; 15% from Afghanistan; 14% from Pakistan; 13% from Hong Kong; 9% from Eritrea, 6% from India; 5% from Nepal, 5% from Sudan; 4% from Ukraine; 3% from Iran; 3% from Bangladesh; 3% from Morocco; 3% from Ethiopia; 3% from El Salvador; 2% from Turkey; 2% from Syria; other countries at 1% and under include Albania, Algeria, France, Chilli, Gambia, Guinea, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Libya, Moldova, Namibia, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sri Lanka, UK and Venezuela.
- Current learners speak 30 different languages with the majority speaking the following; Pashto 14%, Urdu 14%, Chinese 13%, Arabic 7%, Amharic 6%, Tigrinya 6%, Spanish 5%, Hindi 5%, Nepali 5%, Ukrainian 4%, Bengali 3%, Farsi 2%, Turkish 2%, Tamil 2%. Other languages at 1% and under include, French, Albanian, Wolof, Telugu, Sonilki, Russian, Romanian, Portuguese, Persian, Oshiwambo, Malayalam, Kurdish, Hungarian, Italian, English and Dari.
- Our learners are mostly from the following wards; Abbey 19%, Battle 14%, Katesgrove 13%, Park 8%, Coley 5%, Whitley 5%, Redlands 5%, Southcote 5%, Tilehurst 4%, Hawdon 3%, Maiden Erleigh 3%, Bulmershe 2%. Other wards at 1% and under include, Bradfields, Caversham, Church, Coronation, Emmer Green, Finchampstead, Hillside, Kentwood, Loddon, Norcot, Purley, Shinfield, Southlake, Thames, Twyford, Wescot, Slough and Wokingham.
- Data from the Indices of Deprivation 2019 showed the five most deprived areas in and around Reading were located within Whitley; The Meadway in Tilehurst (RG30 4 postcodes); the Honey End Lane area of Tilehurst (RG30 3 postcodes); Norcot (RG30 1 - RG30 6 area) and the Northumberland Avenue area (RG27). This year 31% of our learners came from these specific areas.

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Following initial interviews to identify learning needs, the Centre records achievement, recruitment and retention to check that quality learning is taking place, and that it has met the learners' needs. Progression opportunities are discussed termly by tutors and information advice and guidance advisors.

As part of the quality assurance procedures, regular teaching observations are undertaken which monitor methods of delivery, assessment, management of diversity, and equal opportunities, e-learning contributions and learners' comments. All tutors and crèche staff are qualified and supervised. Observations for the academic year 2022/2023 were undertaken in February, May and June 2023 by the Centre Manager.

In addition to the observations undertaken by the Centre Manager, New Directions observed a sample teaching session. Each tutor also completes a course evaluation after every session.

LEARNER FEEDBACK AND OUTCOMES – THE DIFFERENCE OUR WORK MAKES.

RCLC Learner Feedback 2023 summary

Approximately 10% of learners are interviewed yearly by staff and Trustees. This was the first year that we were able to resume these 1:1 evaluation with our newly appointed outreach/ community development worker. Her post was funded by the National Lottery Funding which we started to receive in December 2022. Learners and tutors also complete teaching and learning evaluation forms and a collection of case studies are also collated at the end of each term. A summary of the feedback is below.

Reasons for coming to UK and feelings about Reading: Whilst some families were economic migrants, who were coming for better education for children and/or to join families, many learners had escaped from extremely dangerous countries, and were mainly living in hostels. Some learners had lived here for a long time but had not been able to learn English. All those interviewed liked living in Reading, mentioning how central and close everything was, with some identifying the good schools, and that it was quiet and felt safe.

Learner Needs: Most learners arrive at the Centre with very little English language, even if they had lived in UK for many years, and sought an opportunity to learn. As girls, many of the women had never gone to school and others had only completed Primary School. Whilst some women had families in the UK, many were alone with husbands and/or children and faced isolation, stress, depression and loneliness. A number of women identified a loss of confidence having come to the UK.

How learners discovered the Centre and enrolment: Most learners first found out about the Centre through a friend or family member who introduced them to the outreach/ support worker, or the administrator, though some were referred by other agencies. Learners had often to wait to get on language courses, but were helped to choose an alternative and their names put down for next term's language class. Enrolment was universally seen as very quick and easy

Perceptions of the Centre and classes: There was universal praise for the quality of the teaching, and the friendliness, kindness and helpfulness of tutors:

'I am learning new skills... the teachers are all very good and explain everything well'

'The tutor is very good and so supportive.'

The free courses are really important to some learners.

The administrator and the outreach/ support workers are also greatly valued, the phrases *'kind'*, *'helpful'*, *'friendly'* and *'supportive'* used in most interviews. The creche is really valued.

Many of the comments cover the Centre as a whole including the other learners:

'I like coming to the Centre as it feels very cozy like home'.

'I have made friends with everyone in my class- I really love it.'

Outcomes - the difference coming to the Centre has made: Learners identified linked benefits:

- **Increased skills, including English language skills, confidence and independence, allowing them to be more resilient, active and empowered members of their community, and better prepared for living and working in the UK** e.g. read letters, fill forms, talk to neighbours, go shopping, get on a bus, visit the doctor or hospital, or visit their children's school on their own. *'Coming to RCLC has given me a lot of confidence, my speaking has improved so much. It has given me more independence as I can now go out on my own and speak to people. I feel more at home here now.'*
- **Making new friends with women from different backgrounds, thus feeling less isolated and lonely and more connected by building stronger social networks and improved wellbeing.** *'I really love coming to RCLC, I am very happy now and have made lots of friends who I go out with outside the Centre'*
- **Feeling happier, less isolated, with reduced stress and depression, improved mental health and feeling more supported and able to ask for help if needed.**
'I had some depression before coming to the Centre but since coming here it has really helped me, I am less stressed. I am more confident and happier now.'
'It has been so amazing coming here. It has changed my life so much.'

Hopes for the future: Almost all of those interviewed planned to work when their English was improved.

Through regularly analysing our learner data and undertaking learner interviews we have identified the following key outcomes from our work. Information we have collected is given under the following two headings.

Learner Progression

- An incredible 100% of all our learners progressed on to either internal courses at RCLC, jobs, volunteering or external courses both accredited and non-accredited in the academic year 2022/2023. This figure highlights the importance of the Centre as an important steppingstone in the journey for our learners to be able to aspire and grow their skills, confidence and become active participants of the community in which they live.
- 7% of the learners progressed into employment or volunteering. This figure is lower than last year (14% for 2021/22), which is primarily due to the fact that 98% of our learners in 2022/23 had no qualifications or Entry level ESOL levels.

Learner Evaluation Forms Feedback

At the end of each course every learner completes a learner evaluation form. The statistics below outline the learners' feedback from their classes over the academic year 2022/2023

- 75% of learners felt their learning experience had been excellent whilst 25% said it was good.
- 73% said that the course level and content was excellent whilst the remaining 27% said it was good.
- 82% said that the way the course was taught was excellent whilst 18% said it was good.
- 85% said that the information and support which they received was excellent whilst 15% said it was good.
- 98% said that they felt they had improved their confidence and language skills.
- 99% felt that their health had improved since coming to the classes.
- 99% said that they would like to do more courses, volunteering or get a job after finishing their classes at RCLC.
- 94% said that they had made new friends since coming to the Centre.
- 91% said that they now knew who to go to, to ask for help and support.
- 92% said that they felt happier since coming to the Centre to learn.
- 93% said that they had learnt new skills.
- 92% said they felt they were now more confident to go out and do other activities since joining the classes.

- 93% said that they felt more confident in their everyday lives.

Learner Engagement

Learner evaluations are held at the end of each term during which learners of the Centre evaluate their learning programmes and raise any issues, concerns, improvements or just highlight what they enjoyed most about their time at the Centre.

In autumn 2016 we started our Learner Voice Forum to engage the learners more deeply in planning and decision making about the running of the Centre. We held a series of meetings to engage learners from the classes and talk to them about what a learner forum is, how they could be involved, who would like to be a part of it and why it was important for them to be involved. A group of 12 learners formed the learners' forum group and from their discussions we were able to discuss their ideas at our strategic business plan day. It was their idea to raise money for the Centre by running pampering sessions at the Centre, selling food and other items. We implemented this by running a termly Women's Day where we raise money for the Centre by selling international food made by the learners, selling beauty treatments by the learners and tutor of the beauty class as well as a bric-a-brac sale.

Sadly, since the pandemic we have been unable to run any of fundraising activities which had been proposed by the learners, but the learner voice group will hopefully restart Autumn 2023.

Volunteers

Some learners have chosen to undertake additional voluntary activities at the Centre. As a small organisation with only a small number of part-time paid staff, volunteering is central to the success of our work. For the volunteers, being able to contribute to the community provides satisfaction and enables them to develop and practice skills they may not otherwise be able to use. For some volunteers it has also provided a basis from which to move into paid employment.

During 2022 we welcomed our volunteers back into the classroom following the end of social distancing and we built up our volunteer group again over the academic year 2022/2023

This year we had 15 learner volunteers (in comparison to only 7 last year) of whom:

- 6 were classroom volunteers.
- 3 were admin volunteer.
- 1 was a creche volunteer.
- 3 were volunteer translators.
- 2 were outreach volunteers.

We also had 2 long-term classroom volunteers who were ex-teachers, 2 were volunteers from Vodafone and 1 was a volunteer who used to work for Healthwatch Reading. In total we had 20 volunteers in 2022/2023.

8. OUR PARTNERSHIPS

During the pandemic RCLC was a part of various local steering groups and forums which we continued to be a part of following the pandemic. Some of these partnerships have evolved so that they are a means of building new partnerships for funding sharing good practice and knowledge as well as means informing health and wellbeing action plans Reading Borough Council. These partnerships include;

- Reading Voluntary Action's (RVA) Voluntary Community Sector Together; Reading Voluntary Action / RBC VCS Leaders' meetings and Hub; Hate Crime, Mental health, and Loneliness and Isolation forums.
- Working with Utulivu and Action for Cohesion and Racial Equality ACRE on mental health issues and RCLC is part of ACRE's community champion group.
- RCLC also regularly attended many Reading Borough Council and VCS led steering groups such as the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, The Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Engagement Board, The Reading and West Berkshire Employment Forum, Reading Voluntary Action Readifriends Forum, The Reading Voluntary Action Social Prescribing Forum, The Loneliness and Social Isolation Steering Group, The RBC Health Inequalities Meeting (linking into the Health and Wellbeing Board strategy), The RBC led Mental Wellbeing group, The RBC Led Older Peoples Working Group Meetings, The One Reading Hub VCS Leaders Meetings and The Volunteer Development Group Meetings.

We are building strategic partnerships with voluntary, statutory and other organisations whose work affects our learners, to provide appropriate and stronger services and opportunities for them. We raise awareness of the issues and needs of the women we serve, wherever possible using their own voices. We sit on many panels influencing policy in Reading, and act as a source of expertise on the issues facing the women we serve for other organisations.

We have formal partnerships with Reading Refugee Group and Communicare and informal partnerships with Social Prescribers (Reading Voluntary Action), Reading Voluntary Action Schools and Parent Engagement Officer, ACRE, Berkshire Women's Aid, Alafia, Oxford Road FGM, City of Sanctuary, Welfare Rights, Citizens Advice Reading (CAR), Readifriends, Adviza, Indian Community Association (ICA), Pakistani Community Centre (PCC), Nepali groups such as SSFA, REGBA, Local CCGs, South Reading Patients Forum and Healthwatch

Through attendance at many meetings (RBC led and RVA led) we have been promoting the work of the Centre and this year engaged in new and exciting partnerships promoting the work of the Centre, increasing referrals both to RCLC and from RCLC as well as providing more opportunities for the women to engage in new activities since the pandemic. Please see below a list of the regular meetings and panels RCLC contributes to locally over 2022/2023;

- RBC Narrowing the Gap Meetings and CTG Meetings
- Wellbeing Health Forum Meetings
- Mental Wellbeing Meetings
- Health Inequalities
- Quarterly subcontractor's meetings with New Directions
- Local Strategic Partnership meetings such the Loneliness and Isolation Steering Group
- Working in partnership with GPs meeting (social prescribing, hosted by Reading Voluntary Action)
- RBC Older peoples working group meetings and Physical Disability and Sensory Needs Network (PDSN)
- Readifriends
- Vaccine Support Group Meetings
- Reading Voluntary Action Thriving Communities
- Volunteer Development Group Meetings
- VCS Prevention Forum/ Voluntary Leaders Meetings
- West Berkshire Employability Forum
- RAN (Reading Advice Network) meetings

- CPAR Partnership Meetings (Research project with Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality, Reading Voluntary Action, RCLC, RBC)
- CareWell Research Project Meetings (University of Reading, Refugee Support Group)
- Migrant Women's Voices and Sanctuary Conference Meetings (Reading University, Refugee Support Group)
- RBC Afghan Refugee Resettlement Meetings
- RBC Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Meetings (SVPR)

DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

A number of new partnerships which started out in 2021/2022 have developed this year and we are grateful for the opportunities they have offered:

Thriving Communities Wildbeing Project:

- In the summer of 2021, RCLC started their new partnership with Reading Voluntary Action (RVA), The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), The Reading Museum, Sport in Mind and the Reading Green Wellbeing Network (Nature Nurture, British Islamic Gardens (BIG) and ReadiFood) with funding from The National Academy for Social Prescribing's 'Thriving Communities' fund. This fund was set up to support local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise projects to improve and increase the range and reach of available social prescribing community activities – especially for those people most impacted by COVID-19 and health inequalities.
- RCLC received referrals from the RVA social prescribers onto our programmes but also through access to our 1:1 outreach support. We also referred and signposted clients as well as encouraged our learners to engage in external enrichment activities at the Museum Of English Rural Life, at RISC and at the Reading Museum. These activities helped to build their confidence, social networks, mental wellbeing, independence, and language skills.
- In summer 2022 there were three trips to the Reading Museum for the 35 learners. Learners walked to the museum with their teachers, received a tour, took part in workshops and were able to practice their English.
- One of the RCLC learners on the gardening workshop is a carer and had a lot of issues with arranging carers to support her son's condition and was so stressed and despondent that she gave up and ended up doing everything herself, rarely leaving the house. She likes gardening and was very happy to join with one of her friends. It was only a 3-week project which was convenient for her to attend. She learnt new skills and shared her skills with others.
She said:
"I really enjoyed the experience! I have been living in Reading for many years and was not aware of Museum of English Rural Life"
- Feedback indicates that even with these short, micro-opportunities at the museums, there was an average increase in wellbeing with over half of participants remarking that they felt happier by the end of the session compared to how they felt at the outset. 76% of attendees felt that they had learnt something new, 70% enjoyed the company of others, and 58% of attendees said that they felt better during the session.
- What was heartening too was that the taster opportunities, for some, inspired a keenness to return to the museums with their families. This was evident in feedback with some attendees saying that they would like to 'come back' or 'having longer in museum'. In turn, the enthusiasm to return had the potential to connect them with other programmes and opportunities.
- In total 112 women took part in the activities from RCLC, and some returned to the Museum of English Rural Life with their families to visit whilst others joined the Babies Yoga at the Museum of English Rural

Life. The project came to an end in Aug 2022, but links are maintained with the Museum of English Rural Life.

NEW PROJECTS

Promoting friendships, Reducing Loneliness and Isolation

RCLC successfully applied for the RBC Covid-19 Small Grant for £10,000 towards the RCLC Befriending Facilitator post and Reading Voluntary Action also gave £10,000 to RCLC from its Ageing Well Fund to match the RBC funding to start the small befriending programme for a year. This new funding was to be used to fund a 2 day per week facilitator who will receive training and how to set up the befriending programme for RCLC through Engage Befriending (Mustard Tree). Mustard Tree provide training to the newly recruited bilingual, female befriending volunteers. Regular trainings will be received through Engage.

However, in agreement with RBC RCLC transferred this funding to Mustard Tree and utilise this funding towards their current Befriending Work instead. This was because RCLC were successful with their Lottery Application which required setting up 2 new posts, in addition to a new IT Tutor post within the space of 6 months. Hence starting another new Befriending Project would have been very difficult to deliver in light of all of the other new posts.

Jelly Arts and RCLC

A new partnership project between Jelly Arts and RCLC started in the autumn of 2022. This involved a programme of eight sessions (six at RCLC and two at Jelly Arts in Broad Street Mall) teaching hand sewing techniques on scrap fabrics to create a small quilt. The course focused on building new friendships to reduce loneliness and isolation as well as learn new sewing skills. The sessions were drop ins, open to all ethnic minority women to come together, have a cup of tea and make friends whilst also produce a piece of artwork to display at RCLC. The course was funded by Reading Borough Council's Small Grants Programme. The beautiful quilts were displayed by the learners at Jelly Art and two out of the 7 learners progressed onto new courses with Jelly Arts.

Food for Families and RCLC

In partnership with Food 4 Families and the Museum of English Rural Life, RCLC ran a 5-week course linking health and wellbeing with gardening in the summer term. The aim of the project was for learners to learn how to grow their own food with or without a garden and on a budget and improve their wellbeing through a new community garden which will be built over the summer. A total of 11 learners completed this course.

9. READING BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMISSIONED WORK

Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Narrowing The Gap (NTG II) partnership moved to supporting service users and others experiencing stress, loneliness social isolation. Our two-service level agreement lots with RBC, 12.1 (titled, Facilitating Peer Support and Reducing Social Isolation For Adults At Risk Because of Language and Cultural Barriers in partnership with CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group) and Lot 1.3 (titled, Steps Towards Employment in partnership with CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group) continued to run online and later as government guidelines changes face to face over the pandemic. The NTG partnership came to an end in Sep 2022. At this point a new partnership was negotiated for RCLC under the Council's Closing The Gap (CTG) over the next 3 years.

RBC Lot 12.1

Lot 12.1 titled, "Facilitating peer support and reducing social isolation for adults at risk because of language or cultural barriers" is a partnership between RCLC, CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group. We were unable to run any classes for the elderly Pakistani, Indian and Nepali women who were on the shielding list with underlying health conditions and were housebound from March 2020 to November 2021. However, from Nov 2021 our yoga tutor was able to run an online seated yoga class for elderly Pakistani and Indian women. Over the academic year 2021/2022 we ran three hugely successful online seated yoga classes for a total of 60 Indian and Pakistani women.

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For the academic year 2022/2023 although there was no longer any shielding or social distancing needed the elderly learners on this course wanted and preferred the seated yoga classes to be delivered online. We have therefore continued to deliver the classes online as the learners prefer online learning as it means that they can still meet up every week, make new friends and get some exercise without having to worry about using public transport, arrange travel and it is easier due to their health requirements. The following classes were delivered in 2022/2023:

- 3 Seated yoga classes (from summer 2022- summer 2023) for elderly Pakistani and Indian women with underlying and long-term health conditions for a total of 49 women online

Some comments from the learners:

"I like the way (the tutor) Simran guides about the exercises & the benefits. It will be great to have classes continued on Zoom since it makes me feel safe to learn at home"

"I really enjoy the sessions. It has helped me to improve the stretching. Zoom allows me to exercise at the comfort of my home & save travel. Please continue these classes."

"Many thanks for providing for such a valuable exercised. I have learned how to move my body. Chair yoga is appropriate for me considering my age. Please continue the classes online."

In January 2022 we were able to run our popular ESOL Skills 4 Health Classes for elderly Nepali women at the Warehouse face to face again. The course content included healthy eating, how to make an appointment at the GP surgery, form filling, giving medical information, making a medical info card, a visit to the health centre, women's health, how to get a prescription and a visit to the pharmacy, health checks, diabetes and blood pressure. The following courses were run from Summer 2022- Autumn 2022:

- 2 ESOL Skills 4 Health Classes for 31 elderly Nepali women.

RBC Lot 1.3

Lot 1.3 titled, “Supporting steps towards employment” was a partnership between RCLC, CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group. This partnership not only allowed the charity to extend its core programme and outreach work but also helps us to achieve a long-term ambition of starting courses to support men and women into work.

Working with a wide range of referral partners, this partnership bid focussed on employability, up-skilling, and employment support for people with complex or longer-term support needs which affect their ability to gain employment - in particular, language acquisition, cultural restrictions, trauma, and exclusion from statutory support through ineligibility. Gaining confidence, English language skills, understanding of the job market and basic tools (CVs), and supported volunteering, are evidenced ways of tackling poverty, unemployment, and health inequalities

Over 2021/ 2022 371 learners enrolled and completed our core programmes of courses. An incredible 96% of all our learners progressed on to either internal courses, jobs, volunteering or external courses both accredited and non-accredited in the academic year 2021/2022. This partnership ended in October 2022 and a new partnership under Closing the Gap (NTG) was formed from November 2022 (please see below)

Closing the Gap Overview (Reading Borough Council)

Closing the Gap (CTG), which was previously commissioned under the Narrowing the Gap II framework, is an established programme within Reading for the commissioning of services to:

- tackle poverty, discrimination and disadvantage.
- promote wellbeing; and
- support thriving communities.

CTG brings together funding from Public Health, Adult Social Care, Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Resources Directorate along with additional funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group to continue support for these causes and further the good work already undertaken to date. Tenders are invited from organisations to enable people in Reading to overcome disadvantage and achieve better outcomes which have been divided into three tender areas listed below;

- Outcome 1: To support people to get out and stay out of poverty
Indicative Funding £270,300 per annum
- Outcome 2: To build resilience, independence and wellbeing, connect people to support and focus on individual and community strengths
Indicative Funding £551,700 per annum
- Outcome 3: To invest in VCS infrastructure support
Indicative Funding £158,000 per annum

RCLC successfully applied in partnership with 6 local charities Communicare, Christian Community Action (CCA), Starting Point (Mustard Tree), ReadFood (Faith Christian Group), Reading Welfare Rights, and CIRDIC (Churches in Reading Drop In Centre) for a partnership tender for outcome 1 and were successful.

RCLC also applied in partnership with Reading Refugee Support Group for outcome 2 and were also successful with this focusing on work with refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking families in Reading. These new partnerships started in November 2022.

Since this partnership was forged, we have delivered the following under each of the 2 outcomes from November 2022- Mar 2023 (Year 1 quarters 1-2). The funding from both outcomes contributes to the core work of the Centre. The numbers listed below are those learners and women funded through RBC funding.

Outcome 1

- 170 women provided with advice and outreach by Reading Community Learning Centre per year (our target is 250 per year)
- 70 women attended courses at RCLC (our target is 102 per year)
- 12 children accessing the creche at the Reading Community Learning Centre (our target is 18 children per year)

Outcome 2

- 39 Elderly Pakistani and Indian women with pre-existing health conditions to complete the online seated yoga class per year (our target is 30 per year)
- 28 Elderly Nepali women to complete the ESOL Skills 4 Health course per year (our target is 30 per year)
- 330 Number of BAME women that have received outreach support and IAG (our target is 45 per month)

As can be seen from the above figures RCLC has already reached the majority of its yearly targets before even adding the figures for the third and fourth quarter which will cover the months Apr- Oct 2023.

New Directions College

RCLC is in a 2-year partnership with New Directions College (ND). As a subcontractor for New Directions, we have delivered non accredited learning programmes for 120 migrant ethnic minority women over the academic year 2022/2023.

The funding RCLC receives is from the Neighbourhood Learning In Deprived Communities (NLDC Fund) which supports local Voluntary and other third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. RCLC engages with some of the most vulnerable learners from Reading and were commissioned by New Directions College to continue to successfully widen participation, engage learners who were traditionally hardest to reach and to give them a joy of learning promoting lifelong learning. In the academic year 2022/2023 RCLC achieved its target of 120 learners

As part of this partnership RCLC reported on the courses being delivered with subcontractor's reports every month, had quarterly review meetings, attended New Directions College trainings and had quality review meetings which included observations of teaching and learning in addition looking at all of our teaching paperwork, CPD, meetings agenda, safeguarding, prevent, observations of teaching, RCLC Business plan and learning and induction paperwork. They were very happy with our quality checks and assessments and have no recommendations regarding our quality.

Our contract with New Directions College will come to an end at the end of this academic year in 2023 and will not be renewed as the funding criteria from NLDC has changed. However, we may look to work on other things and will continue with our math class (Multiply Project) funded by New Directions College.

New Directions College (ND) will also be continuing this partnership by using the Centre as one of their community teaching venues. This academic year they hired the classroom on Mondays and Thursdays and will continue with this format into 2023/2024. Not only will this generate some additional rental income for the centre but also provide in house progression opportunities for RCLC Learners onto accredited courses.

10. RCLC AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

We aim to influence policy and service development across Reading, by advocating for our learners, and wherever possible supporting them to voice their concerns and ideas to agencies and organisations directly. Over this past year we have worked with ex-learners and staff who trained to become researchers, including at universities, on the issues and barriers faced by ethnic minority and refugee women in our community. This year RCLC have taken part in three research projects listed below.

Community Participatory Action Research Project (CPAR)

- Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, inequalities in health have become magnified amongst some Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups disproportionately affected. Public Health England's (PHE) report, *COVID-19: Understanding The Impact On BAME Communities*, demonstrates the widening of existing health inequalities and makes 8 recommendations.
- Community Participatory Action Research puts the community and community experiences at the heart of the research project and empowers the community to set a research agenda. The project was led by 5 community volunteers from each of the partner organisations who were trained by the Scottish Community Development and used a variety of research methods to look into the impact of the pandemic on BAME communities in Reading.
- Aim of the CPAR Research was to;
 - Train individuals from organisations drawn from BAME communities in CPAR to tackle health issues related to COVID-19
 - Equip the BAME community researchers with the skills to later deliver CPAR to help in addressing wider inequalities.
 - Share learning from CPAR across networks in the Southeast and beyond
- This CPAR project is a follow up of PHE report. The Focus is on the Impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minority communities in Reading. It was a partnership project between Reading Voluntary Action, RCLC, Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE), RBC & The University of Reading (UoR) funded by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)
- 5 local researchers focusing on 4 Key areas:
 - The Impact of Covid19 on Mental Health of Ethnic Minority Men in Reading (ACRE)
 - Maternal services and the impact of digital inclusion (ACRE)
 - Investigating the impact of Covid-19 among Nepalese community groups in Reading, Berkshire, UK (Reading Voluntary Action)
 - Impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minority migrant and refugee women in accessing healthcare services (RCLC)
- The RCLC researchers explored inequalities in accessing health services and identifying needs. They completed 104 questionnaires. Key findings were that over 50% of the women interviewed did not know of the 119 Covid helpline and could not access healthcare services on their own largely due to the language barrier, or access to a translator. More than 20% reported a deterioration in their mental and physical health.

RCLC'S CPAR research on, Access to Healthcare services for ethnic minority women and the impact of Covid, evidenced that out of 104 ethnic minority migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women interviewed, 21% reported that their physical health had become worse during the pandemic whilst (26%) said that their mental health had become worse during the pandemic. Our findings highlighted:

- In terms of mental health, many found lockdown and social distancing measures difficult, with little social contact with friends and even family. This was particularly difficult for some ethnic minority women who

described how they already felt isolated in the UK due to living alone with no English language skills or due to close family members living in other countries.

- Our research showed that another layer of stress and anxiety was created due to increased financial pressures. Many respondents and others in their households had been put on the UK Government's furlough scheme and had less income as a result. Some had lost their jobs, with one respondent reporting that it took 4 months to receive universal credit. Financial hardship created tension at home, made worse by being stuck indoors. One person also described how difficult it had been following the death of her father from Covid-19.
- A few people mentioned positive impacts of the pandemic on health and wellbeing, including being able to find more time to exercise at home and go for walks, feeling loved and supported by family and friends and appreciating health more than before the pandemic.
- The detrimental experience of racism has continued to be a strong theme throughout this pandemic, with Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean and Chinese groups reporting either an increase in racial attacks or abuse, or 'being treated unfairly because of their ethnicity', since the start of the coronavirus crisis.
- The CPAR Research also highlighted that translation support and language barriers were still a key in accessing medical care. Out of the 103 respondents, 38% said that they were able to access a translator for their doctor's appointments through the NHS or themselves. 15% would have liked to have had an interpreter as they found relying on translation by a family member could cause a lot of inconvenience. Some also commented on the service and said it was, "Poor quality of translation service: imperfect and inaccurate".

The project has now finished but the lessons learnt from this CPAR project and others undertaken by the University of Reading have resulted in a new [Research Toolkit](#) for community researchers, community organisations, students and academics who want to reflect on and better understand the principles and everyday practices of Participatory Action Research (PAR), how to build community research teams and how to use PAR to understand local issues.

CareWell Research Project

This 2-year research project is in partnership with The University of Reading (UoR) and Reading Refugee Support Group. RCLC has employed 3 community researchers with lived experience of migration and/or seeking sanctuary as a refugee or asylum seeker to find out about the care experiences of families who have relatives in different countries and how caring responsibilities affect their wellbeing and opportunities for education, employment, social activities. We also want to find out about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected families with their caring responsibilities and accessing services. The three researchers have just completed their interviews of families both here and abroad and this summer the analysis of this data will take place. In addition to these interviews with 9 families two of our RCLC staff who care for their own families both here and abroad have also been interviewed. In the autumn term further interviews will be conducted with the children of the families.

New Research Project - Migrant Voices

- In partnership with the University of Reading and RRSRG (funded by the John Sykes Foundation and the University) RCLC will produce a collection of published Women's Stories using the RCLC peer researchers and Reading University Students to collect and write up case studies in the next academic year.
- The Migrant Women's Voices and Sanctuary Conference led by Reading Community Learning Centre and Reading Refugee Support Group will raise awareness of the lived experiences and needs of sanctuary seekers and other migrants in our local community and foster social cohesion, diversity and inclusion. The

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project will share the amazing life stories of migrant and refugee minority ethnic women in Reading, who came to the UK and became learners at Reading Community Learning Centre, in a collection of stories and celebration event in 2023.

11. REMOVING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

To achieve our strategic objective that focuses on removing barriers to learning, we offer excellent learner support and crèche facilities.

Learner and non-learner Information, Advice and Support

The Centre provides hands-on support, advice and encouragement, as many of the people we work with face difficulties that go well beyond their learning needs. Several of our learners have been through very traumatic experiences due to war or becoming refugees or are isolated from their families. The Centre is often seen as a first port of call for help by learners and others with a wide variety of problems and difficulties including accessing benefits, experiencing domestic violence, and dealing with immigration issues. Dealing with a complex society like ours is daunting for women with few language skills and little experience outside the home, or for those who have been traumatised by their current situation or recent history. For many women a simple referral to another agency is not enough. This work has become even more important during the Cost-of-Living Crisis.

This year our informal drop-in sessions have been mostly face to face and through telephone calls. RCLC has continued supporting women to access local services and getting expert help when they needed it, e.g., by making appointments, acting as a link between the user and the service, explaining what letters or forms are about, befriending telephone calls, translating and giving vital health information in regard to the pandemic, and sometimes acting as an advocate for a vulnerable user. Our evaluation work shows that the Centre's work breaks down isolation of the women and their families and helps them link into the wider community. In addition, there is evidence from the literature on global maternal literacy that shows that mothers who can speak, read and write in the language of the country they live in have healthier children who are more able to thrive in education themselves. Around 40-50% of our learners require additional support.

Building on the Centre's current support work with around 70 vulnerable ethnic minority women per month (this figure has more than doubled since last year) RCLC applied and successfully received grant funding from The National Lottery for an additional Outreach Worker/ Social Prescriber to employ a new member of staff for 14 hours per week to offer a listening ear and active signposting and referral service to those who with less extreme mental health issues, especially those requiring weekly support calls. This released the current outreach and support worker to further develop work with people, mainly women, with more extreme examples of stress, depression, and mental ill health from February 2023. By adding a new member of staff to the team we were able to engage with double the number of women per month (as can be seen from our data). The support for clients consisted of:

- Information, advice and guidance on progression, RCLC Courses, Covid, vaccines, government guidelines on the pandemic, how to do lateral flow tests and where to get them, identifying and supporting women to get vaccinations and encouraging them to take part in online group chats about COVID-19;
- Providing Information and supporting them to access services such as food parcels, benefits, housing, clothes for their children, mental and physical health support from the NHS and direct referrals to our partner organisations part of the CTG Contract.
- Translation support, form filling, supporting refugees and asylum seekers based in the local hotels and accompanying learners to appointments.
- In house referrals to CommuniCare, who as part of the partnership have a weekly benefit surgery at RCLC on Tuesdays
- Referrals to Reading Voluntary Action Social Prescribers; and

- Providing mental health support over the phone by our trained mental health first aider and referring learners onto Talking Therapies, Adult Social Care, Together (an outreach service for refugees and asylum seekers and the Intercultural Psychological Clinic.

Over the academic year 2022/2023 RCLC has referred learners and non- learners to the following organisations;

- 27 women to CommuniCare
- 16 women to Readifood
- 15 women to WEA
- 12 women to Together
- 11 women to RSG
- 7 women to RVA Social Prescribers
- 6 women to Adviza
- 5 women to Reading College
- Other referrals were made to New Directions College, the local GP, DWP, RBC, Talking Therapies, Age UK Berkshire, the local mosque, Mencap, local solicitors and NHS 111.

The largest number of referrals were made to RCLC (42%) as the majority of women were interested in courses or further support and advice from RCLC

A total of 874 women were supported with information, advice and guidance (IAG) with support varying from benefit support, filling in forms, making telephone calls, translation support to accompanying them to access services at the Centre from April 2022- Mar 2023. Out of these women 48% of these were not RCLC learners and had been referred to us from friends, neighbours or other organisations and our partners.

New learners mostly come to the centre through word of mouth from a friend, relative, previous learner, a relative or through RCLC outreach work Around 493 women came to the Centre through this route. Care 4 Calais has been our largest referrer, referring 76 women over the academic year 2022/2023 to RCLC. Other referrals to RCLC over the academic year are listed below;

- 26 women were referred by the Pakistani Community Centre (PCC)
- 26 women were referred by Refugee Support Group (RSG)
- 13 women were referred by Alana House
- 9 women were referred by RVA Social Prescribers
- 19 women found us through the RCLC website
- Other referrals were from Age UK Berkshire, Launchpad, Macmillan Cancer, Royal Berkshire Hospital, the Walk in Health Centre, RBC Social Services, Together, WEA, RBC, Job Centre, New Directions College, DWP AND Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA), Thames Valley Police, Brighter Future's for Children, Ukrainian Community Centre, Networking events, local schools and CommuniCare.

Responding to learners' mental health needs

In response to the learner feedback and an increase in mental health concerns during the pandemic, RCLC in partnership with Compass Recovery College (mental health and wellbeing organisation based in Reading, Berkshire, UK, commissioned by Reading Borough Council) and our trained mental health tutor a programme of health and wellbeing courses was developed to take place each term. It was important to address this increased need around mental and physical health by delivering workshops and programmes which used graded language and had translation support to meet learner needs. We knew that these courses had to be taught face to face where additional outreach, signposting to specialist services and 1:1 support could be provided in private at the Centre rather than online where women could not talk in private.

Following these successful workshops in 2022, RCLC developed their own mental and physical wellbeing courses with graded language so that women with low levels of English could still understand, follow and implement the simple wellbeing techniques they were taught in class. These five-week courses taught every term also had simple yoga sessions built into each lesson.

Crèche

Alongside its other activities, the Centre provides a crèche which offers important support for children from 4 months to 5 years old.

Many of these children have had little social contact outside their family and almost all have no English language when they arrive. Some are unfamiliar with toys or have no experience of playing with other children. Others are living in, or have already lived through, extremely difficult circumstances, including as refugees or asylum seekers in hotels.

Through the crèche, children learn to speak English, to be confident separated from their mothers, and to take part in educational play which stimulates social, emotional, physical and intellectual development, in the care of a multicultural team of well-trained, loving workers. The crèche also helps to develop language skills and the ability to socialise and provides informal parenting advice and support. This provides crucial school readiness skills.

We currently employ two crèche workers and a crèche supervisor. In the academic year 2022/2023, 71 children were able to access the creche.

Evaluations from parents/ carers of children in the creche showed that;

- 98% of the children were very happy in the creche and thought that the creche was excellent.
- 92% of the parents thought that their child had learnt new things and that their knowledge had improved.
- 98% said that the care their child received in the creche was excellent whilst 2 said it was good.
- 100% of the parents/ carers thought that their children were safe in the creche.
- 60% found that the information they received on their child's development in the creche was excellent and 40% said it was good.

12. MAINTENANCE OF THE CENTRE

The Centre continues to be a comfortable and well-maintained environment for learners to attend. We have ensured that our IT equipment and software is kept up-to-date and we maintain robust security software. Considerable funds have been spent on maintaining security, fire equipment and alarms, safety lighting, electrical testing and gas heating maintenance in the building.

As a result of the changing government guidelines regarding safe working and learning environments meant that the robust Covid-19 Risk register was updated and reviewed before the start of each term. All staff and volunteers also receive inductions on the risk register before the start of each term. Learners coming into the Centre were and still are given inductions on how to keep themselves and others safe at the Centre.

The Centre has been fully open for the academic year 2022/2023 as we have gone back to pre-pandemic opening times and regulations. Maintenance of the building includes the annual checks for;

- fire alarms and carbon monoxide alarms
- PAT testing and electrics
- emergency lighting
- fire extinguishers
- cleaning
- heaters and boiler
- computer equipment, software, back up clouds and virus protection.
- Covid-19 PPE equipment, signage and lateral flow tests for staff and volunteers

Sadly, in September 2021 the charity SmartWorks (interview coaching and dressing support to help women get into employment) who rented the top floor at the Centre, moved out to new premises across the road as they needed more space and lift access. Due to the increase in the number of learners wanting face to face to classes and to reduce waiting lists we added an extra English intermediate conversation class and a mental health and wellbeing class and moved the sewing class to the top floor so that we could free up the ground floor classroom for room hire for New Directions College. The front room on the top floor has been converted into the outreach office for staff and the small room on the top floor is used by CommuniCare for weekly benefit advice surgeries.

From Dec 2022, RCLC also gained a new landlord, Richard Sharples, who is really interested in our charity work and has visited a couple of times. We had an increase in rent from £36,000 per annum to £39,600 per annum. We have a break clause in the summer of 2026 and a rent review in January 2027.

13. STAFFING

During 2022/23 we continued to employ a Centre Manager who has worked tirelessly to manage the team and, with the Trustees, promote and develop the work of the Centre and building new partnerships. In addition, we now to employ two part-time Support and Outreach Workers, whose work has been invaluable in spreading the word about our service, supporting women on the phone and face to face with advice and guidance including referrals and signposting. We also employ a part-time reception worker and data administrator who records, inputs and analyses our learner data in addition to giving advice and guidance to new learners.

We currently employ 5 sessional tutors: a sewing tutor (for the sewing beginners and improvers classes), one beauty tutor for Looking Good Feeling Good, two English conversation tutors, one IT Tutor and ESOL with Maths tutor and one reading and writing tutor. We sadly lost one of our long-standing Reading and Writing/ IT tutors in the spring term 2023 who had been with the charity for four years. We wish her every success on her new journey ahead.

14. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Despite continuing to keep a tight control over our expenditure during the year, we are reporting a net expenditure in the region of £57,000 for 2022/23 (£23,000 for 2021/22). We have been able to make use of reserves such as the “DCLG 2022-24” funds to meet the shortfall. See the “Reserves Policy” section below for further details.

While the Centre’s income has remained largely the same year-on-year, the increase in shortfall since 2021/22 is due to rising costs and demand for the Centre’s services. Most significantly, staff pay has increased due to increased hours worked and pay increases being awarded where appropriate, e.g. in line with National Living Wage levels and to ensure the pay we offer is fair and competitive.

While we secured some new funding from National Lottery and Reading Borough Council during Summer 2022, which greatly improved the Centre’s financial security, we are aware of the need to diversify our funding. A number of applications have been submitted during 2023 so far and we expect to welcome our new Business Development Manager into her role in early 2024. The Business Development Manager will be tasked with ensuring the long-term financial security of the Centre, e.g. by diversifying income streams. This role is funded by the National Lottery grant (see below).

Income and expenditure figures are monitored monthly against the annual budget and reviewed by the Board at each meeting. We produce detailed cash flow forecasts every month, as we are aware of the importance of closely monitoring our financial position. When contracts are due for review, every effort is made to ensure services are purchased from the most cost-effective source.

Reading Borough Council

Between 2018/19 and 2021/22, funding from RBC consisted of two strands of commissioned work (Closing the Gap outcomes 1 and 2) under employment and adult social care themes. From November 2022, the basis of our contracts with RBC changed, although the two new strands of commissioned work are under similar themes as before. This money has and will continue to provide a valuable base, as it makes a substantial contribution towards our costs.

National Lottery

Funding from National Lottery started in December 2022 and will continue for two years. This funding contributes towards the costs of the Centre’s rent, utilities and existing staff. In addition to this, the funds provide for an additional part time Community Development Worker (appointed February 2023) and a part time Business Development Manager (starting in early 2024).

New Directions

Throughout 2022/23, we maintained our partnership work with New Directions and continued to receive Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) funding from them until July 2023. Our core programme of first steps courses is part funded by New Directions for those learners who meet the enrolment eligibility criteria and complete the course.

Other Income

The Centre received other income in the form of room hires and regular donations. We also continue to charge learners a small enrolment fee for each course and for the use of places in the crèche.

Some of our other sources of income received during 2022/23 have been given below:

- The Henry Smith Charity has provided funding towards certain salaries, rent and other building costs.
- AB Charitable Trust provided unrestricted funding towards running costs and salaries.
- Earley Charity has provided funds for salaries.
- CPAR and Carewell Research projects have funded the costs of peer researchers.

As in previous years, other funding applications were made but were unsuccessful.

Reserves Policy

The Board has examined the Charity Commission's requirements for reserves in the light of the main risks to the organisation. Originally, the Board had established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible assets would be held to cover 3 months' running costs, which with the current rent and salary levels now requires an amount of £56,000 to be held. We have been able to reach this level in the General Reserve.

Funds are also being held in designated reserves as follows:

- One has been set up for the designated purpose of staff costs (£15,000). This has reduced since 31 March 2022 since a higher proportion of the coming year's staffing costs are covered by restricted funds at 31 March 2023.
- A premises reserve (£19,500) has also been set up to cover redecoration costs under our lease, plus other premises costs for 2023/24 that are not covered by restricted or other designated funds. This is unchanged since 31 March 2022.
- Finally, when unspent funding from DCLG was moved to unrestricted funds in August 2020, the Board decided to spread this funding over the following three years rather than spend it all during 2021/22. A reserve of £48,000 was set up to reflect the portion of these funds we are planning to spend in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Around half of this was spent during 2022/23 and £22,275 remains in this reserve at 31 March 2023.

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2023
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the Board of Trustees, as the company directors on 30 October 2023 and signed on the Board's behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Reading Community Learning Centre

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st March 2023

**Charity no
(if any)**

1123017

Set out on pages

39 and 40

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date: 19th September
2023

Name: Rachel Eden

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

ACMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants)

Address:

Holy Brook Associates, Curious Lounge, 1st Floor, Pinnacle Building,
Tudor Road, Reading, England,
RG1 1NH

Section B

Disclosure

NONE

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 06442616 (England and Wales)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1123017

Unaudited Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2023

for

Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Statement of Financial Activities
(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 March 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM					
Charitable activities	2				
Grants – Core programme		15,600	109,921	125,521	104,453
Grants – Research projects		-	13,388	13,388	8,715
Grants – Covid-19 costs		-	-	-	11,500
Courses		3,478	530	4,008	3,250
Crèche		-	-	-	5,000
Total charitable activities		19,078	123,839	142,917	132,918
Donations and legacies		3,768	-	3,768	8,057
Other income	3	4,263	-	4,263	11,544
Total income		27,110	123,839	150,949	152,519
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Building costs		50,397	14,322	64,719	63,829
Office costs		3,027	2,411	5,439	3,176
Programme costs		17,244	40,289	57,534	45,066
Staffing		5,567	74,342	79,909	62,691
Independent examination		480	-	480	380
Total expenditure		76,715	131,365	208,081	175,142
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(49,606)	(7,526)	(57,132)	(22,623)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		168,011	58,887	226,898	249,521
Movements between restricted and unrestricted funds		1,562	(1,562)	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		119,968	49,799	169,766	226,898

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	8	6,592	-	6,592	3,372
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	468	722	1,190	15,422
Cash at bank		118,302	78,252	196,554	248,151
Total current assets		118,770	78,974	197,744	263,573
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	10	(5,395)	(29,176)	(34,571)	(40,048)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		113,375	49,798	163,173	223,524
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		119,967	49,798	169,765	226,896
NET ASSETS		119,967	49,798	169,765	226,896
FUNDS	12				
Unrestricted funds				119,968	168,011
Restricted funds				49,797	58,886
TOTAL FUNDS				169,765	226,898

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2023 – continued

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- a) Ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Section 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- b) Preparing financial statements, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 30 October 2023 and were signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP FRS 102 (second edition) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The charity has taken advantage of the disclosure exemptions applicable to smaller charities.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Going Concern

The board of trustees considers that the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate because there are no material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life. In the year of acquisition, depreciation is recorded based on the number of months the asset is in service.

Improvements to property	Straight line over 1 year
Furniture, fixtures & fittings	25% on reducing balance
Computer equipment	33% on cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)**Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the board of trustees. Designated funds are unrestricted funds which have been allocated by the Board for particular purposes.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes.

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

2. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Activity	2023	2022
		£	£
Grants	Core programme	125,521	104,453
Grants	Crèche	-	5,000
Grants	Research projects	13,388	8,715
Registration fees	Courses	3,478	3,250
MHFA courses	Courses	530	-
Grants	Covid-19 costs	-	11,500
		142,917	132,918

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Reading Borough Council	38,104	36,750
Reading Borough Council – Building Closure	-	10,000
Reading Borough Council – Covid-19	-	-
Reading Borough Council – Zumba	-	1,470
New Directions (NLDC)	12,000	12,000
Henry Smith	10,800	32,233
Garfield Weston	-	15,000
National Lottery	34,412	-
AB Charitable Trust	15,000	-
Healthwatch Reading	10,000	-
Earley Charity	-	5,000
BWCCG and RVA grant	-	5,000
Berkshire Community Foundation grants	-	3,500
CPAR Research Project	600	4,452
Carewell Research Project	12,788	4,263
	133,705	129,668

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

3. OTHER INCOME

	2023	2022
	£	£
Rent receivable	-	9,720
Room and facilities hire	3,648	1,824
Gain on disposal of laptops	420	-
Interest income	195	-
	<u>4,263</u>	<u>11,544</u>

4. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income / (expenditure) is stated after charging / (crediting):

	2023	2022
	£	£
Depreciation – owned assets	2,334	1,536
Other operating leases	825	720
Accounts and independent examination	480	380
	<u>3,639</u>	<u>2,636</u>

5. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

During the year to 31 March 2023 three of the trustees were paid for work they did outside of their trustee duties.

Hemamalini Sundharajan was paid a total of £2,066 (£4,159 2021/22). This is for her work as an outreach worker (£1,568) and as a researcher (£498). A laptop worth £400 was provided for conducting this work during the year to 31 March 2021. This laptop has been returned to the Centre. Hemamalini's outreach work was funded by the BWCCG and RVA grant and the Berkshire Community Foundation grant. Her work as a researcher was funded by the CPAR Research Project grant.

Simran Aul received £530 (£750 2021/22) for teaching online seated exercises classes during the year. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council Lot 12.1 "Outreach & Community Education" and Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" outcome 2.

Raya Mohamed was paid £504 (£587 2021/22) for working in the creche during the year. This was to provide cover for regular creche staff. This was funded by Reading Borough Council Lot 12.1 "Outreach & Community Education", Earley Charity and AB Charitable Trust.

Trustees' expenses

Simran Aul was reimbursed a total of £102 during the year ended 31 March 2023 (£173 2021/22). These expenses cover her monthly Zoom subscriptions, which are required for her to teach online seated exercise classes. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council Lot 12.1 "Outreach & Community Education" and Reading Borough Council "Closing the Gap" outcome 2.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

6. STAFF COSTS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Wages and salaries	128,718	103,611
Social security costs	2,596	1,127
Other pension costs	3,524	2,680
	<u>134,838</u>	<u>107,418</u>

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2023	2022
Crèche	3	3
Tutor	7	6
Outreach and Support Worker	2	2
Manager	1	1
Administrator	1	1
	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>

No member of staff was paid more than £60,000 in the year.

Key management personnel

The charity considers its key management personnel to comprise the trustees and Aisha Malik, the office manager.

7. FUNDING FROM DCLG CONTROLLING MIGRATION

During the year 2020/21, the charity received a grant of £38,340 from DCLG Controlling Migration and also had carried forward grant from 2019/20. Some of this funding was used towards the running costs of the Centre during 2020/21, however it was clear that there would be an underspend of this grant. It was confirmed in August 2020 that the remaining grant could be transferred to unrestricted funds and used towards the running costs of the Centre.

£48,000 of the DCLG underspend was put in a designated reserve titled "DCLG (2022-24)" and this reserve is being used towards the Centre's running costs for years 2022/23 and 2023/24. Just over half of this reserve was used during 2022/23. See note 12 for further details.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Improvements to property £	Furniture, fixtures & fittings £	Computer & other equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2022	9,224	4,760	11,882	25,866
Additions	-	159	5,395	5,554
Disposals	-	-	(4,701)	(4,701)
At 31 March 2023	9,224	4,919	12,576	26,719
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2022	9,224	3,222	10,048	22,494
Disposals	-	-	(4,701)	(4,701)
Charge for year	-	388	1,946	2,334
At 31 March 2023	9,224	3,610	7,293	20,127
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2023	-	1,310	5,283	6,592
At 31 March 2022	-	1,538	1,834	3,372

9. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	698	4,220
Accrued income	-	1,584
Prepayments	491	9,618
	1,190	15,422

10. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE TO WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Social security and other taxes	1,919	1,586
Other creditors	12,481	10,619
Deferred Income	18,608	25,732
Accrued expenses	1,563	2,112
	34,571	40,048

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

11. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Within one year	39,600	36,000
Between one and five years	112,200	-
	<u>151,800</u>	<u>36,000</u>

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 01/04/2022	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2023
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	12,511	(23,880)	18,562	7,193
General Reserve	55,000	-	1,000	56,000
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	33,000	-	(18,000)	15,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	19,500	-	-	19,500
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2023-24)	48,000	(25,725)	-	22,275
	<u>168,011</u>	<u>(49,606)</u>	<u>1,562</u>	<u>119,968</u>
Restricted funds				
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	-	5,197	-	5,197
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	11,331	(10,849)	(482)	-
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	29,260	(17,339)	(151)	11,769
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 1	-	(3,018)	-	(3,018)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 2	-	5,013	-	5,013
RBC and New Directions – Multiply Project	-	1,481	-	1,481
National Lottery	-	6,235	-	6,235
Henry Smith	5,145	(5,144)	-	-
Earley Charity	1,773	(1,773)	-	-
BWCCG and RVA grants	3,971	(3,571)	(400)	-
Compass Recovery College	-	-	-	-
Jelly Arts	-	-	-	-
Healthwatch	-	10,000	-	10,000
CPAR Research Project	315	214	(529)	-
Carewell Research Project	3,721	8,129	-	11,850
MHFA courses	3,370	(2,100)	-	1,270
	<u>58,886</u>	<u>(7,526)</u>	<u>(1,562)</u>	<u>49,797</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>226,898</u>	<u>(57,132)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>169,765</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

The movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	27,110	(50,990)	(23,880)
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	-	(25,725)	(25,725)
	27,110	(76,715)	(49,606)
Restricted funds			
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	12,000	(6,803)	5,197
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	13,709	(24,558)	(10,849)
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	7,729	(25,068)	(17,339)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 1	10,417	(13,435)	(3,018)
RBC – Closing the Gap Outcome 2	6,250	(1,237)	5,013
RBC and New Directions – Multiply Project	2,804	(1,323)	1,481
National Lottery	34,412	(28,178)	6,235
Henry Smith	10,800	(15,944)	(5,144)
Earley Charity	-	(1,773)	(1,773)
BWCCG and RVA grants	-	(3,571)	(3,571)
Compass Recovery College	1,000	(1,000)	-
Jelly Arts	800	(800)	-
Healthwatch	10,000	-	10,000
CPAR Research Project	600	(386)	214
Carewell Research Project	12,788	(4,659)	8,129
MHFA courses	530	(2,631)	(2,100)
	123,839	(131,365)	(7,526)
TOTAL FUNDS	150,949	(208,081)	(57,132)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued**2021/22 Comparatives for movement in funds**

	At 01/04/2021	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2022
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	18,398	(26,695)	20,809	12,511
General Reserve	53,000	-	2,000	55,000
Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)	1,578	(1,578)	-	-
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	42,000	-	(9,000)	33,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	33,000	-	(13,500)	19,500
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	48,000	-	-	48,000
	195,976	(28,273)	309	168,011
Restricted funds				
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	5,338	(5,338)	-	-
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	11,524	(192)	-	11,331
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	26,735	2,524	-	29,260
Reading Borough Council – Zumba	-	-	-	-
Inner Wheel	2,567	(2,566)	-	-
Henry Smith	(2,531)	7,676	-	5,145
Awards4All	2,450	(2,450)	-	-
Earley Charity	-	1,773	-	1,773
BWCCG and RVA grants	871	3,100	-	3,971
Berkshire Community Foundation	-	309	(309)	-
CPAR Research Project	-	315	-	315
Carewell Research Project	-	3,721	-	3,721
MHFA courses	6,592	(3,221)	-	3,370
	53,545	5,651	(309)	58,886
TOTAL FUNDS	249,521	(22,623)	-	226,898

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

2021/22 comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	47,851	(74,546)	(26,695)
Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)	-	(1,578)	(1,578)
	47,851	(76,124)	(28,273)
Restricted funds			
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	12,000	(17,338)	(5,338)
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	23,500	(23,692)	(192)
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	13,250	(10,726)	2,524
Reading Borough Council – Zumba	1,470	(1,470)	-
Inner Wheel	-	(2,566)	(2,566)
Henry Smith	32,233	(24,558)	7,676
Awards4All	-	(2,450)	(2,450)
Earley Charity	5,000	(3,227)	1,773
BWCCG and RVA grants	5,000	(1,900)	3,100
Berkshire Community Foundation	3,500	(3,191)	309
CPAR Research Project	4,452	(4,136)	315
Carewell Research Project	4,263	(542)	3,721
MHFA courses	-	(3,221)	(3,221)
	104,668	(99,017)	5,651
TOTAL FUNDS	152,519	(175,142)	(22,623)

There were a number of transfers between funds during the year. All were approved by the trustees and, where appropriate, the funder. More details are given below.

General Reserve

The Board has set aside £56,000 in order to cover three months' working capital requirements and three months' rent payments. This is in line with the Centre's reserving policy.

Designated Reserve (Staffing)

An amount of £15,000 has been set aside from the General Reserve to cover future staffing costs. We have been able to reduce this reserve compared to 2021/22 since restricted funds cover most of our expected 2023/24 staffing costs.

Designated Reserve (Premises)

An amount of £19,500 has been put aside to cover general premises costs for 2023/24 that are not covered by restricted funds or the DCLG designated reserve.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)

A small designated reserve was held to show the deposit paid by SmartWorks Reading on their rental of premises. This reserve was no longer required as at 31 March 2022, since SmartWorks moved out in October 2021 and the deposit was returned.

Designated Reserve (DCLG 2023-24)

During the year to 31 March 2021 we were allowed to take underspent restricted funds of around £62,500 from DCLG into unrestricted funds, with the permission of DCLG. The Board decided to spread this unrestricted funding over a number of years rather than spend it all during 2021/22. The designated reserve of £48,000 has been set up to use during financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. We have used just over half of this reserve in 2022/23 and will use the rest during 2023/24.

13. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There are no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2023.

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

England & Wales - Charity number 1123017

Accounts

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2022
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD**CONTENTS**

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1. CHARITY INFORMATION

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2022. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities', effective 1 January 2019.

The Trustees have complied with the duty in section 17(5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance.

Reference and administrative details

Registered Company number
6442616 (England and Wales)

Registered Charity number
1123017

Registered office
94 London Street
Reading RG1 4SJ

Trustees

Clare Furneaux
Hemamalini Sundararajan
Jennifer Theron
Karen Rowland
Katharine Sarah del Tufo
Linda Smith
Lucy England
Parveen Brar - staff representative
Raya Mohamed
Rosie Chambers
Shahanaz Uddin - resigned 6/6/2022
Simran Aul-date
Stephen Harland - resigned 14/9/2021

Company Secretary

Aisha Malik (Centre Manager)

Independent examiner

Holy Brook Associates

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

Reading Community Learning Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated and registered as a charity. The company was incorporated on 3 December 2007 and registered as a charity on 29 February 2008 under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and it is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up its members are required to contribute a sum not exceeding £10 towards any outstanding debts.

The Board of Directors

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charitable law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles, one third of the directors must retire from office each year but can offer themselves up for re-election at the Annual General Meeting.

Board members provide a wide range of financial, HR, life experience and business and management skills. Board meetings are held at approximately six weekly intervals, currently using Zoom. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction and policies of the organisation. Sub-groups have been formed to take forward the work on learner engagement, and fundraising. The Centre Manager and a Tutor representative attend Board meetings in an advisory capacity. Day to day responsibility for the running of the organisation and the provision of services is delegated to the Centre Manager under the direction of the Board.

Recruitment, appointment, and induction of trustees

When an individual is being considered as a potential new Board member they are first invited to a meeting with the Chair and Centre Manager where the work of the organisation and the contribution of the trustees is discussed. If there is mutual agreement that the applicant should continue with their application, they will be provided with appropriate written information about the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of trustees, and they may be invited to provide a CV, and attend a Board meeting as an observer. Their application will be discussed by the trustees and if appropriate they will be formally invited to join the Board. Further induction and training will be organised on an individual basis according to the specific needs of the appointee. Trustee packs are given to all new Trustees.

Members

Reading Community Learning Centre is a membership organisation. There are currently 57 members, mainly longstanding supporters of the work of the Centre. Reading Community Learning Centre's Board is accountable to its members for the operation of the organisation in line with its stated objectives. Members receive a report on the Centre's work and progress at least annually, and they are eligible to vote at general meetings of the organisation.

Risk management

The Directors have a responsibility to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to manage the finances effectively and guard against fraud. A number of measures and protocols have been established which aim to safeguard the finances of the Centre and to provide satisfactory systems in all areas of work which expose the charity to risk. The Board of Directors has continued to take a conservative approach to financial decisions during this year of the charity's life and has aimed to establish an appropriate reserve of funds as advised by the Charity Commission. A full risk register is maintained and reviewed at Board Meetings and staff are regularly reminded of the operational risks. Since early March 2020, the Centre Manager has developed an additional Covid-19 Risk register and set of protocols.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

The Centre's objectives are, for the benefit of the public in the Reading area:

1. The relief of poverty and the needs of those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, in particular women and children and those from minority ethnic communities. This is done, for example, by:
 - a. providing general education and training, including language skills and other basic skills, to advance them in life and/or assist them to adapt within a new community; and
 - b. providing or assisting them in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, financial hardship or social circumstances with the objects of improving their conditions of life and relieving the effects of isolation.
2. To promote racial and religious harmony and raise awareness about, and to promote good relations between, persons of different racial and religious groups.
3. To advance the education of the public about issues relating to migrants, those seeking asylum and/or granted refugee status to help promote knowledge, mutual understanding and mutual and good relations between them.
4. To relieve financial hardship among people living or working in the Reading area by providing information, advice and support.

The Board has referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

Vision

Marginalised ethnic minority women in Reading achieving their individual hopes and fulfilling their aspirations.

Mission

Reading Community Learning Centre:

- offers marginalised ethnic minority women opportunities for social, educational, integration, and volunteering activities;
- provides services that address barriers to learning.
- supports progression into further education, social and employment opportunities, and
- encourages these women to raise their issues and concerns and engage with agencies.

Aims

Reading Community Learning Centre aims to enable marginalised ethnic minority women to be skilled, confident active citizens who contribute to society.

Overall objectives

1. To provide safe, first step educational opportunities for excluded ethnic minority women- for example:
 - building their confidence and independence;
 - developing language skills.
 - pre-employment skills; and
 - getting them started on journeys towards further education and employment.
2. To support the progression of ethnic minority women onto further education, volunteering or work activities for example:
 - working with other organisations to ensure a clear pathway into further education.

- providing supported volunteering opportunities in the Centre and access volunteering opportunities in other organisations
 - working with employers; and
 - supporting the development of internal social enterprise within RCLC.
3. Through outreach and research work in communities, engage women who face cultural, religious and social barriers in learning and integration.
 4. To provide holistic women-centred support and advice that focuses on each women's individual needs. This will remove barriers to learning, integration and employment and support progression- for example:
 - free classes at convenient times during school hours
 - access to a free crèche
 - referral onto other organisations
 - help with filling in forms
 - advising how to access services; and
 - Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on educational and employment progression.
 5. To break down barriers between people from different cultures and to foster mutual support, respect, understanding and friendship. This will contribute to integration and community cohesion.
 6. To provide opportunities for learners to influence the work and direction of the Centre. To allow learners to voice their issues and concerns to external agencies on issues that affect their lives- for example, learner forums, local consultations for health, police and other agencies.
 7. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built in support at the Centre, as well as recruiting host community volunteers, supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression. This will support learning, friendship, and integration.
 8. To work with marginalised ethnic minority men alongside women when culturally appropriate or a particular need is identified.
 9. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2021-2022

Despite some longer-term funding from Henry Smith and Garfield Weston, COVID-19 has impacted our core funding. So, drawing on funder feedback, the Board started in March to develop plans for next few years as outlined below.

Our 1-Year Strategic Plan

1. We will build financial resilience and continue to diversify funding.
The financial impact of COVID-19 has heavily impacted the charity sector and our ability to generate income so we'll need to be more creative than ever in raising funds that we need to deliver our vital work. We will:
 - a. continue to maintain tight control over expenditure throughout 2021/22;
 - b. recruit a part-time business development manager to diversify our funding and promote the Centre's work;
 - c. seek either to move to cheaper shared premises or negotiate a reduced rent for our current building;
 - d. build a new strategic vision for 2022-2024 to continue to grow the organisation.
2. We will respond to the urgent need to address isolation and focus on the mental health needs of learners. The COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on ethnic minority migrant and refugee women already experiencing isolation and loneliness. We will address this by providing mental health support and we will:

- a. continue to be a part of the COVID-19 Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCSO) and statutory support groups
 - b. recruit one dedicated social prescriber and outreach worker who is mental health first aid trained.
3. To build closer collaboration with partner organisations to help the women we support recover from the crisis. We will:
- a. Continue to connect and engage with our partner organisations
 - b. Ensure women are referred directly to partner organisations who can provide them with the support they need.
4. We will find the women who are most often invisible to other services and offer them the support they need.
Many of the women we serve are often invisible to other services and denied the support they need. This has only been amplified and compounded by the COVID-19 crisis. We will therefore:
- a. strengthen our existing outreach activity
 - b. recruit one new outreach worker to spread the word of our services at this critical time.
5. To continue to strengthen the Board of Trustees and recruit, if possible, an ethnic minority woman to the role of Chair.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2022-24

1. To recruit a consultant to coordinate an organisational review in Summer/Autumn 2022. This will support the strategic growth of the charity and enable us to provide the best support we can for learners.
2. To raise funding and continue to diversify funding incomes, including:
 - a. income generation from the building
 - b. to strengthen the fundraising capacity of the Centre with a focus on strengthening the management resources and
 - c. seeking stable core funding, building on the work of the business development manager.
3. To provide a core programme for a minimum of 270 learners pa, involving recruitment, assessment, delivery, Information Advice and Guidance, signposting, and well-being support to learners and others approaching the Centre for support.
4. To help to overcome isolation by creating a space for women to access information, advice and support, and build friendships, confidence and resilience.
5. To provide mental health support, awareness and referrals to partners and courses at the Centre. To put the women we work with at the heart of what we do by encouraging learners to influence and contribute to the work and direction of the Centre. We aim to do this through participation in the Trustee Board, as volunteers and through learner voice groups. We will also continue to monitor and evaluate our services to continually improve and evolve our services for learners.
6. To continue promoting and raising awareness of women's issues and rights, that are pertinent to the empowerment of migrant and refugee women who use the Centre. To embed these within the existing courses and maintain links with relevant healthcare organisations and social prescribers in light of the increased demand for support work resulting from the pandemic.
7. To further improve and strengthen the marketing and communication of the Centre as a source of support, advice, and signposting to learners, and other communities and organisations, building on increased awareness of the needs of migrant and refugee ethnic minority women.

8. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built-in support at the Centre. Supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression.
9. To continue to recruit community volunteers and develop integration opportunities with host community members and groups.
10. To increase cultural awareness and promote friendships creating bilateral benefits for the learners and the community volunteers who support them.
11. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory, and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners.

4. THE WORK OF THE CENTRE

Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) exists to help marginalised women from ethnic minority backgrounds to achieve their individual potential. The majority of the women we support are migrants, refugees or asylum seekers who speak little or no English, and often have limited contact outside of the home. No matter what barriers a woman faces we work alongside her as she overcomes obstacles to realising her aspirations. For many women, this includes improving their English, volunteering locally, gaining qualifications or securing a job.

Based in central Reading, we offer a programme of outreach activities, training classes, workshops and social opportunities at our Centre. These are designed to build confidence, increase skills and reduce the social isolation of local ethnic minority women, many of whom are amongst the most isolated, deprived and vulnerable in our community. In 2021/2022, we supported 371 women from 34 different countries. Our model encourages community cohesion, breaks down barriers between cultures, and fosters mutual respect amongst the women. No other service in Reading reaches such a diverse group of women, giving us a unique insight into the needs of local ethnic minority communities.

Reading Community Learning Centre provides informal education and support for women who are unable to access more mainstream services because of the educational, social or cultural barriers they face. Some of the women who come to the Centre have had little access to formal education, most do not speak English, and sometimes they are not literate in their own language. Almost all the migrant and refugee learners face cultural and other challenges, and for some the Centre offers their only contact outside their immediate family. The Centre's unique success has been in making learning accessible to the hardest to reach learners through a community-based approach, built on gaining the trust of often isolated communities and designing courses and services to meet their needs.

RCLC's educational provision creates ways into education for the most tentative and least confident of learners. Women with very limited language and literacy skills can take their first steps into learning here, and women who have gained qualifications in their countries of birth can access support to develop their English skills. This may mean coming to a social activity, joining an English conversation class or learning English through one of several practical creative classes. Learners are drawn from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The development of cross-cultural friendships is one of the most important benefits for many RCLC learners.

Since the pandemic, supporting women around their mental health issues has become increasingly important and will remain a key focus.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC FROM APRIL 2021

RCLC was nominated by Reading Refugee Support Group (RSG) for a High Sheriff Award for our exceptional contribution to Berkshire communities over 2021. The High Sheriff Awards are focussed on recognising the exceptional work done by so many in Berkshire to support those in need in their communities during the pandemic. There were 6 award categories and over 100 nominations in total across the categories from Berkshire.

RCLC was nominated in the category, supporting the isolated, which was open to all groups and individuals who have helped isolated people feel more connected and valued. It was real recognition of what RCLC had achieved during the pandemic to be nominated. The online event showcasing the winners was truly humbling and inspiring. Thank you for nominating us RSG.

Thanks to grants and contracts from the organisations listed below, we have been able to run a sustained programme of activities throughout the year. Also, unlike many charities, our staff have stayed with us throughout the year, which has allowed us to offer real continuity, for which the trustees are very grateful:

- Reading Borough Council
- NLDC Grant from New Directions
- The DCLG Controlling Migration Grant
- The Henry Smith Charity
- Awards For All Grant
- Inner Wheel
- The Gerald Palmer Trust,
- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- The AB Charitable Trust
- The Berkshire Community Foundation Grant For Social And Mental Health Support To BAME Women
- The Berkshire Community Foundation Grant For Vaccine Support
- Public Health England for the CPAR Project
- The National Academy for Social Prescribing's 'Thriving Communities' fund (Wildbeing Project)
- Earley Charity
- University of Reading (CareWell Research Project) and
- Rental income from WEA and SmartWorks.

From April 2021 we were finally able to have more of our core programme of classes taught face to face again and the creche opened for the first time since the pandemic began. Mothers and carers who could not engage in any activities due to a lack of childcare could finally access courses and advice at the Centre face to face. RCLC continued to provide a few classes online in summer 2021 as there were still Covid-19 regulations in place. All staff took weekly Covid tests, and we also taught the learners at the Centre not only how to order the test kits but how to use them. All staff and learners wore face masks or visors to the Centre in accordance with the government guidelines at that time.

Actions taken to incorporate safe teaching, learning and support at RCLC from April 2021:

1. Practical courses such as sewing, beauty and IT and classes where the learners had very little basic English and IT skills were all taught face to face in the summer 2021 term. The remaining core programme was taught online so that we could provide a blended learning programme.
2. All learners were enrolled face to face whilst maintaining social distancing and using PPE. At the enrolment stage all learners were given a detailed induction on health and safety, online safety, how to log into Zoom for their classes, how to use WhatsApp video, the current Covid-19 protocols, and where to get support if they had symptoms of Covid-19. All learners coming to the Centre were given face masks.
3. At the start of each term, all tutors had an online in-house Zoom training session, received the Covid-19 risk register training with revised Covid regulations and the online teaching guidelines training for RCLC. All staff were given Covid test kits and face masks
4. All enrolled learners were set up with their class WhatsApp group to learn, post homework, use to connect with the tutor and stay in touch with friends from the class.
5. RCLC tutors used Zoom to teach the online classes for those learners who had IT equipment and had a higher level of English.
6. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses for the community and voluntary sector funded by RBC were developed from new online teaching materials and training released by Mental Health First Aid England. These courses were primarily for employees of DWP, RBC and the VCS sector who were supporting people with financial difficulties over the pandemic. The eligibility for this course expanded to include community and faith-based organisations who were supporting people through the pandemic.

7. When face to face classes and support were not possible, RCLC successfully stayed in contact with our most vulnerable learners over the phone. The outreach work continued virtually (by phone, Zoom or WhatsApp video calls) and when possible, face to face, allowing the outreach worker to check in on learners once a week to make sure that they were safe, healthy or if they needed anything like groceries, medicine or other support which we could refer them to.
8. RCLC stayed in contact with the elderly female learners from the Pakistani Community Centre (PCC), and the elderly Nepalese ladies who were enrolled on our ESOL Skills for Health Courses at the Warehouse. Friendly phone chats were arranged once a week to support them to reduce loneliness and isolation. These calls provided the latest health information regarding the pandemic and in supporting them to access the services they needed as they were on the shielding list and housebound. Our very popular online seated yoga course for the elderly learners from the PCC and Indian Community Association continued throughout the year with learners commenting on how much easier it was for them as they did not need to worry about travelling by bus yet still meet friends and do exercise safely in their own home.
9. RCLC regularly liaised with staff on the changing needs in the community so that we could respond appropriately and quickly.

With Covid-19 rules changing from the Autumn 2021 term we were able to run all the core programmes including IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) face to face with a creche albeit with smaller classes to maintain social distancing, mask wearing and teaching in ventilated rooms. This face-to-face contact for some was vital as many ethnic minority women were isolated and vulnerable over the lockdown period.

Increased support needs

RCLC continues to experience an increase in demand as we support women and their families through the pandemic. Many have experienced disproportionate challenges and difficulties around mental and physical health, loss of finance, social isolation and domestic abuse - compounded by language barriers and racism. Covid-19 has further exposed some of the health and wider inequalities that persist in our society. The virus itself has had a disproportionate impact on certain sections of the population, including those living in most deprived neighbourhoods and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

There is emerging evidence that the pandemic has increased Ethnic minority women's mental health support needs along with increased domestic abuse. Just under four in ten (36%) adults in Britain reported that during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown they have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety. Two in ten (21%) said that they have been finding lockdown difficult to cope with, while 14% said that social isolation was making 'relationships at home more difficult than usual'. This last figure rose to one in five (19%) for BME groups. A recent Red Cross Report identifies that following lockdown the situation has worsened for Ethnic minority people. Runnymede Trust report that in their survey over a third of Ethnic minority people (36%) have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety during the coronavirus crisis, with one out of five struggling with social isolation.

The detrimental experience of racism has continued to be a strong theme throughout this pandemic, with Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean and Chinese groups reporting either an increase in racial attacks or abuse, or 'being treated unfairly because of their ethnicity', since the start of the coronavirus crisis.

Responding to learners' mental health needs

In response to the learner feedback and an increase in mental health concerns during the pandemic, RCLC in partnership with Compass Recovery College (mental health and wellbeing organisation based in Reading, Berkshire, UK, commissioned by Reading Borough Council) and our trained mental health tutor a programme of health and wellbeing courses was developed to take place each term. It was important to address this increased need around mental and physical health by delivering workshops and programmes which used graded language and had translation support to meet learner needs. We knew that these courses had to be taught face to face

where additional outreach, signposting to specialist services and 1:1 support could be provided in private at the Centre rather than online where women could not talk in private.

Since the pandemic, RCLC has had to change and adapt its ways of working providing additional weekly telephone support to 30+ vulnerable learners per month. Although we were successfully able to adapt our services to deliver learning, and outreach support online, eventually all core programmes were taught face to face from Autumn 2021. RCLC faced many challenges which were carried over from the previous year when the pandemic was at its height. Please see the table below for the challenges and how RCLC responded.

Challenge due to the pandemic	Action taken by RCLC
Rising waiting lists for the English classes. Pre-pandemic these were 10-15 people per language class; this rose to 24 people on each language course during the period we were closed and has not declined since. To meet the social distancing rules and the RCLC Covid 19 risk register guidelines we could not run all the classes face to face. Some delivery was online (but many learners did not have the equipment, language or IT knowledge to do this).	We added an additional English Conversation Intermediate Class taught twice a week from Autumn 2021 responding to learner feedback requesting more English classes with more frequency. We now have English Conversation classes with in-house progression routes from the pre-entry level through to intermediate all taking place twice a week. From the autumn term in 2021, we were able to increase our class sizes in response to government Covid guidelines. This also helped to reduce waiting lists. We ended the 2021/2022 academic year with class sizes of up to 15 learners in the summer 2022 term.
Many learners did not have access to equipment (smartphone, tablet or computer), the internet – or if they did it was often with very poor signal strength - or the language or IT skills to learn online.	With the support of the RCLC Outreach team and the generous support of RVA's (Reading Voluntary Action) Digital Inclusion Programme For The Under 60's, the RCLC outreach worker was able to help our learners to fill in application forms and apply for free digital kits, connectivity and support. In total seven women were able to benefit from this scheme. Sadly, not many of our learners were eligible due to their income and there was limited funding for the under 60's for the scheme.
Learners feeling a lack of connection through online learning – the learners wanted to see the teacher and get the one-to-one support they would in a class. They missed the additional holistic support from the Centre, being able to make new friends and getting to know new people across cultures, which they simply could not do online. Learning this way was just not the same and it just exacerbated their loneliness and isolation.	The change in government guidelines in summer 2021 enabled RCLC to run face to face classes again which meant those women who really could not learn online, needed a creche or had very little language skills were able to learn at RCLC face to face after a long hiatus. RCLC prioritised these classes to be run face to face which was a huge lifeline for the many women who faced additional barriers associated with home learning. Building supportive relationships and connections with body language, eye contact, smiles and gestures, were now possible face to face. This helped clients feel comfortable, at ease and able to talk more freely. This supportive relationship takes much longer to build over the phone. RCLC continued with its blended learning with half the core programme being taught online as well as some face to face. Outreach support for 30 women per month was also provided both face to face and virtually. This included befriending chats for the older learners from the Nepali, Pakistani and Indian community.

Challenge due to the pandemic	Action taken by RCLC
Some learners did not have a private and safe home environment in which to learn. It was hard to speak freely and express themselves when they were surrounded by family and people who could listen in.	RCLC remained open for those learners who could travel to RCLC and needed face-to-face support. Outreach visits to the home (with full PPE) or phone calls were also available. Learners who were most vulnerable were prioritised (those learners with no access or ability to engage in online learning, who could only speak a few words of English or were in receipt of 1:1 support) onto the face-to-face classes from summer 2021.
Women were deterred from joining online classes due to the pressures of caring for their families, time taken up for home schooling, and family decisions to prioritise giving laptops and other equipment to children or to their partners. Women lacked the ability to take time for themselves.	RCLC outreach workers helped complete forms for learners who were eligible for the RVA's Digital Inclusion Programme For The Under 60's to access equipment and connectivity. From summer 2021, all the beginners and pre-entry English classes were taught face to face as were the practical and IT Classes so that learners could use the IT, beauty and sewing equipment at the Centre. This meant that the women could have time for themselves, learn in a safe space and have access to equipment which they did not have at home.
Learners and staff feeling overwhelmed by Covid 19 and the lockdown situation.	Summer 2021: RCLC's Let's Chat and Learn online discussion group took place every Wed from 3pm- 4pm. The first two sessions (open to all women) were delivered in partnership with <u>Compass Recovery College</u> about mental health, depression, anxiety, panic attacks and how to deal with them, and their services. A total of 27 women attended these sessions. RCLC continued the weekly chat group for learners online so that they could ask questions about health and wellbeing led by our Programme Development Worker/ Outreach Worker for 32 women From autumn 2021 RCLC started running its mental and physical wellbeing workshops and classes focusing on teaching mindfulness, identifying common mental health issues such as anxiety or depression and simple techniques to cope with these issues as well as where to get specialist support. These classes were graded to meet the English requirements of the learners with extra 1:1 support such as translation and assisted signposting at the Centre from our MHFA trainer and outreach worker.

The feedback from learners in our online classes highlighted how the pandemic had had a devastating impact on their mental health and increased loneliness. Many of them felt that;

- They were lonelier, more depressed and had worse physical and mental health because they could not attend classes, social activities, or access support and friendship.
- Shielding in homes -with elders, home-schooling, depression meant that they felt unable to raise alarms; this exacerbated their mental health problems as they had no privacy.
- There was a lack of access to culturally appropriate food packages.
- Language barriers and lack of IT equipment and technical skills affected access to GP services and medication online
- Women who were shielding and whose families could not visit experienced more domestic violence, and culturally they felt obliged to stay at home to look after the elderly in their home and not report any issues.

VACCINE SUPPORT WORK

RVA Vaccine Support Grant and Covid-19 Work

RCLC were successful in receiving the RVA Vaccine Support Grant for £1,500. With this funding we:

- Worked in partnership with HealthWatch Reading and ran a session for RCLC learners discussing the vaccine and dispelling the myths around it at the end of Feb 2022 in some of the main languages spoken by learners at the Centre
- We provided regular phone checks with our elderly Nepali, Pakistani and Indian learners- checking they have received their vaccines, giving them information and supporting them through illnesses with befriending calls. (20-30 women per month)
- We provided a weekly chat group for learners online so that they can ask questions about health and wellbeing led by our Outreach Worker- 32 women
- RCLC attended the Vaccine Support Group meetings where feedback and experiences of our learners over the pandemic was shared. Information received from the meetings was disseminated to RCLC learners, staff, volunteers and the women we supported outside of the classes.
- RCLC learners were taught how to use Covid-19 tests, where to get them and were informed about up-to-date government guidelines around Covid-19 in addition to vaccine information.
- RCLC shared the Covid-19 translated materials to learners through our face-to-face classes and class WhatsApp groups and Facebook.

Vaccination and Health Check Day

- On 22/3/2022 RCLC in partnership with RVA and local NHS nurses, became a vaccine Centre offering vaccinations to RCLC learners and anyone else in the local area who needed one. A community nurse carried out health checks for blood sugar levels, BMI and blood pressure too. Prior to this session an information session on vaccines was delivered to all the classes for 112 learners.

PARTNERSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC

- We were a part of local steering groups and forums (Reading Voluntary Action's Voluntary Community Sector Together; RVA/ RBC VCS Leaders' meetings and Hub; Hate Crime, Mental health, and Loneliness and Isolation forums).
- Working with Utulivu and Action for Cohesion and Racial Equality ACRE on mental health issues and RCLC is part of ACRE's community champion group.
- Through the Vaccine Support Group, we held webinar sessions on COVID-19, gave information on accessing vaccines, translated information, and promoted the vaccine Centres.
- RCLC also regularly attended many Reading Borough Council and VCS led steering groups during the pandemic such as the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, The Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Engagement Board, The Reading and West Berkshire Employment Forum, RVA Readifriends Forum, The RVA Social Prescribing Forum, The Loneliness and Social Isolation Steering Group, The RBC Health Inequalities Meeting (linking into the Health and Wellbeing Board strategy), The RBC led Mental Wellbeing group, The RBC Led Older Peoples Working Group Meetings, The One Reading Hub VCS Leaders Meetings and The Volunteer Development Group Meetings.

5. COURSE PROGRAMME**Core Programmes run in 2021 - 2022**

In total we have had 371 women who have completed our core programmes in the academic year 2021/2022. Throughout the 2021/2022 financial year due to government guidelines some terms were taught with a mixture of online and face to face classes whilst others were completely face to face.

Summer 2021 (online and face to face classes)

- English Conversation Pre-Entry and Beginners (at RCLC)
- English Conversation Improvers and Intermediate (online via Zoom)
- English Reading and Writing Beginners (online via Zoom)
- English Reading and Writing Improvers (at RCLC)
- Sewing Beginners, And Improvers (at RCLC)
- Looking Good Feeling Good Improvers (at RCLC)
- Beginners IT (at RCLC)

Autumn 2021 (all face-to-face classes)

- English Conversation Pre-Entry, Beginners, Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners and Improvers
- Sewing Beginners and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- ESOL Skills for Employability (course for men and women)
- Beginners IT
- Mindfulness and Stress Management
- Psychological First Aid Workshop

Spring 2022 (all face-to-face classes)

- English Conversation Pre-Entry, Beginners, Improvers and Intermediate
- English Reading and Writing Beginners and Improvers
- Sewing Beginners and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- ESOL Skills for Employability (course for men and women)
- Beginners IT
- Mindfulness and Stress Management
- Psychological First Aid Workshop
- Exercise Class

Alongside our core programme of classes, we also ran a free Zumba Exercise Class with creche from Nov- Feb 2022, funded by Reading Borough Council's Small Grant Programme. The funding provided access to physical exercise to migrant and refugee ethnic minority women who would not have the means, knowledge or accessibility to any sports activities outside of their homes. This was the first exercise class that these learners had attended in over 2 years due to the pandemic. A total of 12 women completed the 10-week course.

Supporting Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian Refugees

- The Centre has worked closely with the Reading Refugee Support Group in helping the families, especially the women, access ESOL classes and community resources. A representative from the Centre has regularly attended the Reading Borough Council Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme Case

Management Group. Over the pandemic there were no SVPR Meeting or new families who could arrive in Reading due to the government guidelines around the pandemic.

- RCLC has also regularly attended the Afghan Resettlement Scheme Case Management meetings (ARAP) led by RBC which started in the summer of 2021 following the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan in April 2021. Working in partnership with other members on the board we supported Afghan women to access the ESOL Classes, 1:1 outreach support and translation support at the Centre.
- Since autumn 2021 we have seen a steep increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers enrolled on courses at the Centre reflecting the global migration trends but also because we have received more referrals from partners such as RRSB and Care 4 Calais. As these women have no recourse to public funding, they cannot access any support from the accredited learning providers in Reading but can from RCLC.
- Sadly, as Russia declared war on Ukraine this year, we started to see our first Ukrainian refugees at the Centre in the summer of 2022. However as Ukrainian refugees can access publicly funded courses, healthcare and other support services we have seen far fewer Ukrainian nationals come to the Centre. We are continuing to work in partnership with the Council to support any Ukrainian refugee women who need our support.
- By the end of the spring term 2022, around 40% of the learners were asylum seekers and refugees. This is a big increase in comparison to this time last year when the percentage was just 17%. The vast majority of the new arrivals to our Centre in the last two terms have been from the Eritrea and Hong Kong.

Improving citizen engagement – learners engaging with agencies about issues that affect their lives

536 learners (please see details below) attended the information sessions at RCLC with guest speakers over the three terms or were supported on enrichment activities as well as outreach sessions outside the Centre. Guest speakers are invited to the Centre so that women have the opportunity to engage and access important information in a safe and private environment. The guest speakers are broadly categorised into terms which are themed on women's health, accessing local services or are linked to women's rights and safety. This year we ran the following sessions and trips;

Autumn 2021

- A trip to Caversham Court Gardens Park for elderly Nepali women with Readibus and translation support.
- A guest speaker from the Victims First Specialist service, covering Berkshire providing support for victims of sexual violence, specifically within the ethnic minority communities. These communities may not be aware of the service Victims First can provide. They offer an ISVA service, offering emotional and practical support/ advocacy; however, their organisation also offers support for any individuals affected by crime. The sessions were attended by 40 women
- Adviza (National Careers Service) gave information sessions to 88 learners
- Healthwatch interviewed four learners with very few English language skills to complete the Healthwatch questionnaire on accessibility of health services. We will receive the report once it has been completed.

Spring 2022

- A visit from The Learning Hub, Institute of Education from the University of Reading for 2 multi-lingual story telling sessions at the creche for the 6 children and their parents. The aim of the sessions was to encourage parents to tell stories to children in their first language as well as learning to read in English. Having a second language is hugely beneficial for the children. Research shows that learning a second language boosts problem-solving, critical-thinking, and listening skills, in addition to improving memory,

concentration, and the ability to multitask. Children proficient in other languages also show signs of enhanced creativity and mental flexibility.

- 21 learners attended two indoor gardening workshops held at the MERL (Museum of English Rural Life) supported by our outreach worker in partnership with Food 4 Families to encourage indoor gardening.
- Adviza (National Careers Service) gave information sessions to 99 learners
- The NHS Cancer Services Team held a focus group with 8 learners to gauge learner feedback on the information in their new cancer leaflets to make sure that they were relevant and understood by different communities before finalising it.
- Volunteer led Reading Library visit which included a tour of the library and how to make a library card. At the end of the trip one of the learners said:

“There are so many books with lots of local information, and in many languages (not just English) I will bring my children to become members too”

Summer 2022

- A visit from ReadFood’s Sarah Pedlow to introduce the Womens’ Project which gives women the opportunity to volunteer at Readifood for 2-3 hours per week and receive training to help them get some work experience for their CV for 28 learners.
- Oxford Health Nurses and Azra Raja (inclusion manager at RVA) delivered information sessions to 55 learners on the Covid-19 vaccine
- Adviza (National Careers Service) gave information sessions to 100 learners
- Supported trip to the Abbey Wellbeing Café for 10 women
- Celebration picnic for 47 learners and their children at RCLC with food and certificates
- Outdoor English Conversation Class at Forbury Gardens for 24 women with food and certificates for the end of term.

Mental Health First Aid Courses (MHFA)

In response to the growing need for MHFA courses in Reading during the pandemic since Mar 2021, RCLC were requested by RBC to run some MHFA Courses online for the voluntary and statutory sector staff across Reading, Slough, Wokingham, West Berkshire, and Bracknell who were supporting vulnerable men and women in financial crisis over the pandemic. We were given funding from RBC to run a total of 5 courses from April 2021-March 2022 for a total of 45 men and women. We were also requested by RVA to run an additional 2 MHFA courses for volunteers and charity sector staff working during the pandemic with face-to-face roles who were working with vulnerable and isolated families. A total of 23 men and women completed these two RVA Funded MHFA Courses over Oct and Nov 2021.

Following on from these successful courses RCLC received additional funding from RBC to deliver more MHFA Courses online and one face to face. The course eligibility was expanded by RBC to include staff and volunteers who worked for faith-based organisations supporting people through the pandemic. From May 2021 we delivered 5 MHFA Courses for 54 men and women. The advantage of teaching it online has meant that RCLC was able to engage with many people across a large area and the course was accessible to those who struggled to travel due to the pandemic guidelines, mental health or physical needs.

6. ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Centre continues to collect evidence of its outputs and outcomes through:

- Enrolment forms and attendance records of people attending. These forms record the diversity of people participating in learning opportunities, retention and achievement. We also record data onto an educational management information system database.
- Tracking of progression into further learning, volunteering and work.
- Evidence of outcomes and progression through feedback forms, records of course reviews, regular 1:1 interviews completed by all of the staff, students and trustees using volunteers as interpreters as required.
- Case studies and individual learning records and diaries of individual learning journeys and evidencing the impact of engagement in informal learning.
- For the children in the crèche: enrolment forms and attendance records, termly reviews, feedback from parents and individual learning journeys for the children.

Learner Statistics

371 learners enrolled on our core programme of courses at RCLC 2021/2022

- 91% of our core programme learners have no UK qualifications or are at an entry level in ESOL
- 6% of our learners have qualifications at level 1-level 3 (UK)
- 19% of learners have a degree or higher from their home country
- 92% of our learners are unemployed
- 26% of our learners are on benefits (it is important to remember that 40% of our learners were asylum seekers and refugees who could not work and were ineligible to claim benefits due to their immigration status so in reality this percentage should be much higher)
- 4% of our learners are retired
- 8% of our learner's work part-time or full-time
- 17% of our learners use the crèche, a lifeline for those who cannot afford childcare costs (please note we had to have fewer children in the creche due to social distancing rules)
- 28% are aged 41-50; 27% of our learners are aged 31-40; 25% are aged 19-30; 20% are 51 plus.
- 6% of our learners are refugees and 27% are asylum seekers (in 2021 this figure was 12%, it has more than doubled this year), whilst 69% of the learners had not been living in the UK for more than 3 years. Demographically we have seen a huge increase in the number of new migrants and refugees in this academic year- more so than in any other year.
- 9% of learners disclosed that they needed additional support. Of this 9%, 50% of the women declared they had additional social and emotional difficulties and 32% had mental health difficulties.
- 9% of the learners progressed into full-time or part-time employment and 5% onto volunteering. This figure of 8% is 3% higher than last year but was primarily due to the difficulty faced by many people wanting to progress into volunteering or employment for the first time when large sectors of the economy were badly affected by the pandemic and the lockdown (people were furloughed, made redundant or left without any employment).
- 85% of our learners progressed onto internal courses at RCLC

- 6% of our learners progressed onto accredited courses with the WEA, Reading College or New Directions whilst 7% progressed onto other courses in the community.
- This year learners came from an amazing 33 different countries with the majority from the following; 15% Libya, 13% Hong Kong, 12% Pakistan, 12% Eritrea, 8% Afghanistan, 4% Morocco, 3% Turkey, 3% Syria, 2% India, 2% Iraq, 2% Namibia, 2% Ukraine, 2% Bangladesh, 2% El Salvador, 2% Nepal, 2% Sri Lanka, 2% Romania, 2% Sudan. The remaining 10% of learners came from Ethiopia, Honduras, Ecuador, Iran, Mexico, Poland, Senegal, Spain, Thailand, Venezuela and Yemen.
- Current learners speak 27 different languages. 26% of the learners on the courses this year spoke Arabic as their first language compared to 35% last year. 13% of the learners speak Chinese, 12% of the learners speak Urdu, 8% speak Tigrinya, 7% speak Pashto, 6% speak Spanish and 4% speak Amharic. Other languages spoken in the Centre include Bengali, Calabar, Farsi, German, Hindi, Kurdish, Nepali, Oshiwambo, Persian, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Wolof and Yoruba.
- Our learners are mostly from the following wards; Abbey (40%), Katesgrove (17%), Whitley (5%), Battle (5%), Park (4%), Church (4%), Tilehurst (2%), Southcote (2%), Shinfield North (2%), Redlands (2%), Minster (2%), Coley (2%)

7. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Following initial interviews to identify learning needs, the Centre records achievement, recruitment and retention to check that quality learning is taking place, and that it has met the learners' needs. Progression opportunities are discussed termly by tutors and information advice and guidance advisors.

As part of the quality assurance procedures, regular teaching observations are undertaken which monitor methods of delivery, assessment, management of diversity, and equal opportunities, e-learning contributions and learners' comments. All tutors and crèche staff are qualified and supervised. Observations for the academic year 2021/2022 were undertaken in February, May and June 2022 by the Centre Manager.

In addition to the observations undertaken by the Centre Manager, New Directions has observed a selection of the tutors. Each tutor also completes a course evaluation after every session.

Approximately 10% of learners are interviewed yearly by staff, students and Trustees. Unfortunately, this year, due to the Covid-19 lockdown, our planned learner interviews could not take place, though there were class feedback sessions, learner evaluations and a collection of case studies from each class per term.

Learner Feedback and Outcomes – the difference our work makes

Interviews with learners over six years have identified that:

- the learners particularly value learning new skills, gaining confidence and the chance of progression;
- the staff are seen as very welcoming, encouraging, kind and friendly and give practical and emotional support;
- learners like the Centre's family atmosphere, friendliness and safety;
- learners make friends and enjoy themselves;
- the teachers and staff are seen as friendly, supportive and helpful; and
- the learners are mutually supportive.

Through regularly analysing our learner data and undertaking learner interviews we have identified the following key outcomes from our work. Information we have collected is given under the following two headings.

Learner Progression

- An incredible 96% of all our learners progressed on to either internal courses at RCLC, jobs, volunteering or external courses both accredited and non-accredited in the academic year 2021/2022. This figure highlights the importance of the Centre as an important steppingstone in the journey for our learners to be able to aspire and grow their skills, confidence and become active participants of the community in which they live.
- 14% of the learners progressed into employment or volunteering- this figure has doubled since last year. This low figure was primarily due jobs being scarce over the pandemic period which made it increasingly difficult for our learners who wanted to progress into volunteering or employment for the first time especially when large sectors of the economy were badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Learner Evaluation

- Almost 100% of learners taking English classes report that they are now more confident in speaking English in everyday situations, though some note that they still lack full confidence,
- and some still struggle with understanding English.

- 98% of learners from the English classes reported that they are now more confident and independent. They can venture out where they wouldn't have gone before with their new confidence and independence. This allows them to be more resilient, active and empowered members of their community, and better prepared for living and working in the UK. e.g. talk to neighbours, make phone calls, go shopping, get on a bus, visit the doctor or hospital, visit their children's school on their own, read their children stories.
- 98% of learners reported feeling happier, less isolated, with reduced stress and depression, improved mental health and feeling more supported. This was particularly true for single parents, those who had no family in the UK, and those who had experienced traumatic situations.
- 93% of learners reported making new friends with women from different backgrounds, thus feeling less isolated and lonely and more connected by building stronger social networks.
- Many learners identified that having access to free classes and the crèche were particularly important for them as they were on benefits or low incomes. Others are paying for courses elsewhere or would be willing to pay for extra classes at RCLC.

This feedback is broadly consistent with earlier years.

Learner Engagement

Learner evaluations are held at the end of each term during which learners of the Centre evaluate their learning programmes and raise any issues, concerns, improvements or just highlight what they enjoyed most about their time at the Centre. When the Centre was closed due to Covid-19 these learner evaluation forms were completed by learners online and when classes resumed face-to-face they went back to their paper versions.

In autumn 2016 we started our Learner Voice Forum to engage the learners more deeply in planning and decision making about the running of the Centre. We held a series of meetings to engage learners from the classes and talk to them about what a learner forum is, how they could be involved, who would like to be a part of it and why it was important for them to be involved. A group of 12 learners formed the learners' forum group and from their discussions we were able to discuss their ideas at our strategic business plan day. It was their idea to raise money for the Centre by running pampering sessions at the Centre, selling food and other items. We implemented this by running a termly Women's Day where we raise money for the Centre by selling international food made by the learners, selling beauty treatments by the learners and tutor of the beauty class as well as a bric-a-brac sale.

Sadly, due to the pandemic and the closure of the Centre for two terms we were unable to run any of fundraising activities which had been proposed by the learners but the learner voice group will restart Autumn 2022.

Volunteers

Some learners have chosen to undertake additional voluntary activities at the Centre. As a small organisation with only a small number of part-time paid staff, volunteering is central to the success of our work. For the volunteers, being able to contribute to the community provides satisfaction and enables them to develop and practice skills they may not otherwise be able to use. For some volunteers it has also provided a basis from which to move into paid employment.

At the start of 2020, pre pandemic we had 19 volunteers. Our classroom volunteers are mainly qualified teachers. However, due to social distancing rules and the small number of learners who we could have in the classroom meant that we could not add a classroom volunteer into the classroom until summer 2021, as it meant taking up the space of a learner. The office volunteers also could not volunteer as the office has no window and does not have enough space for another person. During 2022 we welcomed our volunteers back into the classroom and will build up our volunteer group again in Autumn 2022.

This year we had 7 learner volunteers of whom:

- 3 were classroom volunteers
- 1 was an admin volunteer
- 1 was a creche volunteer
- 2 were volunteer translators

We also had 2 long-term classroom volunteers who were ex-teachers.

8. OUR PARTNERSHIPS

We are building strategic partnerships with voluntary, statutory and other organisations whose work affects our learners, to provide appropriate and stronger services and opportunities for them. We raise awareness of the issues and needs of the women we serve, wherever possible using their own voices. We sit on many panels influencing policy in Reading, and act as a source of expertise on the issues facing the women we serve for other organisations.

We have formal partnerships with Reading Refugee Group and Communicare and informal partnerships with Social Prescribers (RVA), RVA Schools and Parent Engagement Officer, ACRE, Berkshire Women's Aid, Alafia, Oxford Road FGM, City of Sanctuary, Welfare Rights, Citizens Advice Reading (CAR), Readifriends, Adviza, Indian Community Association (ICA), Pakistani Community Centre (PCC), Nepali groups such as SSFA, REGBA, Local CCGs, South Reading Patients Forum and Healthwatch

Through attendance at many meetings (RBC led and RVA led) we have been promoting the work of the Centre and this year engaged in new and exciting partnerships promoting the work of the Centre, increasing referrals both to RCLC and from RCLC as well as providing more opportunities for the women to engage in new activities since the pandemic. Please see below a list of the regular meetings and panels RCLC contributes to locally over 2021/2022;

- RBC Narrowing the Gap Meetings and CTG Meetings
- Wellbeing Health Forum Meetings
- Mental Wellbeing Meetings
- Health Inequalities
- Quarterly subcontractor's meetings with New Directions
- Local Strategic Partnership meetings such the Loneliness and Isolation Steering Group
- Working in partnership with GPs meeting (social prescribing, hosted by RVA)
- RBC Older peoples working group meetings and Physical Disability and Sensory Needs Network (PDSN)-
- Readifriends
- Vaccine Support Group Meetings
- Emergency Covid Support Group Meetings
- RVA Thriving Communities
- Volunteer Development Group Meetings
- Older People's Working Group
- VCS Prevention Forum/ Voluntary Leaders Meetings
- West Berkshire Employability Forum
- RAN (Reading Advice Network) meetings
- CPAR Partnership Meetings (Research project with ACRE, RVA, RCLC, RBC)
- CareWell Research Project Meetings (Reading Uni, RRSg)
- Migrant Women's Voices and Sanctuary Conference Meetings (Reading University, RRSg)
- RBC Afghan Refugee Resettlement Meetings
- RBC Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Meetings (SVPR)

GROWING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

A number of new partnerships have developed this year and we are grateful for the opportunities they have offered:

Thriving Communities Wellbeing Project:

- In the summer of 2021, RCLC started their new partnership with RVA, The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), The Reading Museum, Sport in Mind and the Reading Green Wellbeing Network (Nature Nurture, British Islamic Gardens (BIG) and Readifood) with funding from The National Academy for Social

Prescribing's 'Thriving Communities' fund. This fund was set up to support local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise projects to improve and increase the range and reach of available social prescribing community activities – especially for those people most impacted by COVID-19 and health inequalities.

- RCLC received referrals from the RVA social prescribers onto our programmes but also through access to our 1:1 outreach support. We also referred and signposted clients as well as encouraged our learners to engage in external enrichment activities at the MERL, at RISC and at the Reading Museum. These activities helped to build their confidence, social networks, mental wellbeing, independence, and language skills.
- In Autumn 2021, the first in a series of trips were organised for four classes from RCLC to have supported and translated visits to MERL, receive a tour, visit the gardens but also take part in activities linked to their English such a looking at poetry, an investigation and the health and beauty qualities of the plants- linking to the beauty class. A total of 43 learners attended.
- In Spring 2022 there were another two class trips to attend indoor gardening workshops at MERL and RISC. A total of 49 learners attended.
- In summer 2022 there were three trips to the Reading Museum for the 35 learners. Learners walked to the museum with their teachers, received a tour, took part in workshops and were able to practice their English.
- One of the RCLC learners on the gardening workshop is a carer and had a lot of issues with arranging carers to support her son's condition and was so stressed and despondent that she gave up and ended up doing everything herself, rarely leaving the house. She likes gardening and was very happy to join with one of her friends. It was only a 3-week project which was convenient for her to attend. She learnt new skills and shared her skills with others.
She said:
"I really enjoyed the experience! I have been living in Reading for many years and was not aware of MERL"
- Feedback indicates that even with these short, micro-opportunities at the museums, there was an average increase in wellbeing with over half of participants remarking that they felt happier by the end of the session compared to how they felt at the outset. 76% of attendees felt that they had learnt something new, 70% enjoyed the company of others, and 58% of attendees said that they felt better during the session.
- What was heartening too was that the taster opportunities, for some, inspired a keenness to return to the museums with their families. This was evident in feedback with some attendees saying that they would like to 'come back' or 'having longer in museum'. In turn, the enthusiasm to return had the potential to connect them with other programmes and opportunities.
- In total 112 women took part in the activities from RCLC, and some returned to MERL with their families to visit whilst others joined the Babies Yoga at MERL

RCLC & Compass Recovery College

- RCLC successfully applied for a £1000 grant from Compass Recovery College. This was for voluntary groups in Reading, who were embedded in and providing grass roots support to their communities. Each community group was to work collaboratively with Compass to create bespoke mental health and wellbeing offers. The aim of this funding was to support mental health and wellbeing in vulnerable groups in Reading, by enabling local voluntary and community groups to create bespoke wellbeing workshops with Compass, in a way that reflected the individual experiences and needs of their communities.
- RCLC used the grant towards two staff training workshops on emotional boundaries and self-relaxation and funding towards the creche and tutor costs to teach four 2-hr workshops which were co-produced with

RCLC and Compass Recovery College. The workshops were on topics such as understanding common mental health challenges (e.g. anxiety, depression); 5 Ways to Wellbeing; Being Kinder to Ourselves and Yoga for self-care. By embedding mental health and wellbeing as a golden thread throughout the RCLC core programme it was way to create a mental health aware centre for staff and learners.

- The workshops and courses were a huge success with 37 learners and 8 RCLC staff attending over the summer term. 98% of learners reported feeling happier, less isolated, with reduced stress and depression, improved mental health and feeling more supported.

FUTURE PARTNERSHIP WORK

New Project: Promoting friendships, Reducing Loneliness and Isolation

RCLC successfully applied for the RBC Covid-19 Small Grant for £10,000 towards the RCLC Befriending Facilitator post. RCLC will be working in partnership with Mustard Tree from Sep 2022 to start a much-needed bilingual befriending service. RVA will also be giving £10,000 to RCLC from its Ageing Well Fund to match the RBC funding to start the small befriending programme for a year. This new funding will be used to fund a 2 day per week facilitator who will receive training and how to set up the befriending programme for RCLC through Engage Befriending (Mustard Tree). Mustard Tree provide training to the newly recruited bilingual, female befriending volunteers. Regular trainings will be received through Engage.

Jelly Arts and RCLC

A new partnership project between Jelly Arts and RCLC will start next year. A programme of eight sessions (six at RCLC and two at Jelly Arts in Broad Street Mall) will teach hand sewing techniques on scrap fabrics to create a small quilt. The course will focus on building new friendships to reduce loneliness and isolation as well as learn new sewing skills. The sessions will be drop ins, open to all ethnic minority women to come together, have a cup of tea and make friends whilst also produce a piece of artwork to display at RCLC. The course will be funded by Reading Borough Council's Small Grants.

Food for Families and RCLC

In partnership with Food 4 Families RCLC will run a 10-week course linking health and wellbeing with gardening once a term. The aim of the project will be for learners to learn how to grow their own food with or without a garden and on a budget and improve their wellbeing through a new community garden which will be built over the summer.

9. READING BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMISSIONED WORK

Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Narrowing The Gap (NTG II) partnership moved to supporting service users and others experiencing stress, loneliness social isolation. Our two-service level agreement lots with RBC, 12.1 (titled, Facilitating Peer Support and Reducing Social Isolation For Adults At Risk Because of Language and Cultural Barriers in partnership with CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group) and Lot 1.3 (titled, Steps Towards Employment in partnership with CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group) continued to run online and later as government guidelines changes face to face over the pandemic. The NTG partnership will come to an end in Sep 2022. At this point a new partnership will start for RCLC under the Council's Closing The Gap (CTG) over the next 3 years.

RBC Lot 12.1

Lot 12.1 titled, "Facilitating peer support and reducing social isolation for adults at risk because of language or cultural barriers" is a partnership between RCLC, CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group. We were unable to run any classes for the elderly Pakistani, Indian and Nepali women who were on the shielding list with underlying health conditions and were housebound from March to November 2021. Face to face exercise classes, ESOL Skills for Health, trips and language classes were not feasible due to their increased vulnerability. Learning and engaging in online classes was harder due to the language barrier, a lack of confidence, using public transport and a lack of IT equipment and knowledge. With RBC's agreement, we therefore changed our support to providing regular befriending phone calls every week, to remain in contact with the ladies and provide them with outreach support over the phone. This part of our work increased over the pandemic and has continued to run, which meant that we needed to employ an additional outreach worker funded through grants, to support our current outreach worker from Dec 2021.

From Nov 2021 our yoga tutor was able to run an online seated yoga class for elderly Pakistani and Indian women. Over the academic year 2021/2022 we have been able to run three hugely successful online seated yoga classes for a total of 60 Indian and Pakistani women. We will continue to run these online until they feel they are ready to learn face to face. This was a huge accomplishment for them as they had never even used a computer before, let alone Zoom. It was a real boost to their confidence, physical and mental health. At present they prefer online learning as it means that they can still meet up every week, make new friends and get some exercise without having to worry about using public transport. Some comments from the learners:

"I would like to continue online yoga classes with our Tutor. I thoroughly enjoy them and look forward to them every Monday. Helps me talk to other ladies, get motivated and actually do some yoga. The RCLC Tutor n is a brilliant teacher. Very explanatory in her yoga sessions. Love her and the classes."

"Thanks for the Zoom yoga sessions. As I live far away it is not possible for me to come to Reading for classes, so the Zoom sessions are excellent for me. I have benefited so much from doing yoga. My aches and pains have reduced and my back feel less painful. Many thanks for doing this class. I really have benefited from them."

In January 2022 we were able to run our popular ESOL Skills 4 Health Classes for elderly Nepali women at the Warehouse again. Twenty-six Nepali women completed 2 courses in the spring and summer term covering healthy eating, how to make an appointment at the GP surgery, form filling, giving medical information, making a medical info card, a visit to the health centre, women's health, how to get a prescription and a visit to the pharmacy, health checks, diabetes and blood pressure.

RBC Lot 1.3

Lot 1.3 titled, "Supporting steps towards employment" is a partnership between RCLC, CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group. This partnership not only allows the charity to extend its core programme and outreach work but also helps us to achieve a long-term ambition of starting courses to support men and women into work.

Working with a wide range of referral partners, this partnership bid focusses on employability, up-skilling, and employment support for people with complex or longer-term support needs which affect their ability to gain employment - in particular, language acquisition, cultural restrictions, trauma, and exclusion from statutory support through ineligibility. Gaining confidence, English language skills, understanding of the job market and basic tools (CVs), and supported volunteering, are evidenced ways of tackling poverty, unemployment, and health inequalities

Over 2021/ 2022 371 learners enrolled and completed our core programmes of courses. An incredible 96% of all our learners progressed on to either internal courses, jobs, volunteering or external courses both accredited and non-accredited in the academic year 2021/2022

New Directions

RCLC are in a 2-year partnership with New Directions College. As a subcontractor for New Directions, we have delivered non accredited learning programmes for 120 migrant ethnic minority women over the academic year 2021/2022.

The funding RCLC receives is from the Neighbourhood Learning In Deprived Communities (NLDC Fund) which supports local Voluntary and other third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. RCLC engages with some of the most vulnerable learners from Reading and were commissioned by New Directions College to continue to successfully widen participation, engage learners who were traditionally hardest to reach and to give them a joy of learning promoting lifelong learning. In the academic year 2021/2022 RCLC achieved its target of 120 learners.

New Directions will be renting out our IT classroom and laptops in autumn 2022 which will not only be wonderful for learners at the Centre who can progress onto accredited courses at RCLC run by New Directions but also in generating funds for the charity through rental income.

Closing the Gap Overview (Reading Borough Council)

Closing the Gap (CTG), which was previously commissioned under the Narrowing the Gap II framework, is an established programme within Reading for the commissioning of services to:

- tackle poverty, discrimination and disadvantage.
- promote wellbeing; and
- support thriving communities.

CTG brings together funding from Public Health, Adult Social Care, Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Resources Directorate along with additional funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group to continue support for these causes and further the good work already undertaken to date. Tenders are invited from organisations to enable people in Reading to overcome disadvantage and achieve better outcomes which have been divided into three tender areas listed below;

- Outcome 1: To support people to get out and stay out of poverty
Indicative Funding £270,300.00 per annum
- Outcome 2: To build resilience, independence and wellbeing, connect people to support and focus on individual and community strengths
Indicative Funding £551,700 per annum
- Outcome 3: To invest in VCS infrastructure support
Indicative Funding £158,000.00 per annum

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 06442616 (England and Wales)

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1123017

RCLC successfully applied in partnership with local charities Communicare, Christian Community Action (CCA), Mustard Tree, CIRDIC (Churches in Reading Drop In Centre) and Faith Christian Group for partnership tender for outcome 1 and were successful.

RCLC also applied in partnership with Reading Refugee Support Group for outcome 2 and were also successful with this focusing on work with refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking families in Reading. These new partnerships will start in November 2022.

10. RCLC AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

We aim to influence policy and service development across Reading, by advocating for our learners, and wherever possible supporting them to voice their concerns and ideas to agencies and organisations directly. Over this past year we have worked with ex-learners and staff who trained to become researchers, including at universities, on the issues and barriers faced by ethnic minority and refugee women in our community. This year RCLC have taken part in three research projects listed below.

Community Participatory Action Research Project (CPAR)

- Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, inequalities in health have become magnified amongst some Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups disproportionately affected. Public Health England's (PHE) report, *COVID-19: Understanding The Impact On BAME Communities*, demonstrates the widening of existing health inequalities and makes 8 recommendations.
- Community Participatory Action Research puts the community and community experiences at the heart of the research project and empowers the community to set a research agenda. The project was led by 5 community volunteers from each of the partner organisations who were trained by SCDC and used a variety of research methods to look into the impact of the pandemic on BAME communities in Reading.
- Aim of the CPAR Research was to;
 - Train individuals from organisations drawn from BAME communities in CPAR to tackle health issues related to COVID-19
 - Equip the BAME community researchers with the skills to later deliver CPAR to help in addressing wider inequalities.
 - Share learning from CPAR across networks in the SE and beyond
- This CPAR project is a follow up of PHE report. The Focus is on the Impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minority communities in Reading. It was a partnership project between RVA, RCLC, Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE), RBC & The University of Reading (UoR) funded by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)
- 5 local researchers focusing on 4 Key areas:
 - The Impact of Covid19 on Mental Health of Ethnic Minority Men in Reading (ACRE)
 - Maternal services and the impact of digital inclusion (ACRE)
 - Investigating the impact of Covid-19 among Nepalese community groups in Reading, Berkshire, UK (RVA)
 - Impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minority migrant and refugee women in accessing healthcare services (RCLC)
- The RCLC researchers explored inequalities in accessing health services and identifying needs. They completed 104 questionnaires. The final report is yet to be released but the key findings were that over 50% of the women interviewed did not know of the 119 Covid helpline and could not access healthcare services on their own largely due to the language barrier, or access to a translator. More than 20% reported a deterioration in their mental and physical health.
- The overall project aims to bring about change to locally based health and social systems and will inform our work from April 2022 onwards. This is part of our mission to ensure that the often-overlooked voices of ethnic minority women are heard by local statutory and voluntary partners in local decision-making.

Community Consultation for Quality of Life (CCQoL)

- In partnership with Reading University School of Architecture for RBC, RCLC were involved in a research project where five RCLC classes had the opportunity to be involved in a Community Consultation for Quality of Life (CCQoL) organised by Reading University in March 2022.
- The aim of the project was to review approaches to community consultation across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and to provide space for people to have a say in the planning of their city, in particular looking at how it affects their quality of life (a person's physical, social and psychological wellbeing)
- This involved trips to the Broad St Mall pop up room, an interactive room to give feedback. The University also visited RCLC to carry out focus group discussions/ questionnaires with a total of 24 learners.

CareWell Research Project

This research project is in partnership with The University of Reading (UoR) and Reading Refugee Support Group. RCLC is employing 3 community researchers with lived experience of migration and/or seeking sanctuary as a refugee or asylum seeker to find out about the care experiences of families who have relatives in different countries and how caring responsibilities affect their wellbeing and opportunities for education, employment, social activities. We also want to find out about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected families with their caring responsibilities and accessing services. The three researchers have just completed their training and will start interviewing researchers over the next academic year.

New Research Project - Migrant Voices

- In partnership with the University of Reading and RRSF (funded by the John Sykes Foundation and the University) RCLC will produce a collection of published Women's Stories using the RCLC peer researchers and Reading University Students to collect and write up case studies over the next academic year.
- The Migrant Women's Voices and Sanctuary Conference led by Reading Community Learning Centre and Reading Refugee Support Group will raise awareness of the lived experiences and needs of sanctuary seekers and other migrants in our local community and foster social cohesion, diversity and inclusion. The project will share the amazing life stories of migrant and refugee minority ethnic women in Reading, who came to the UK and became learners at Reading Community Learning Centre, in a collection of stories and celebration event in 2023.

11. REMOVING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

To achieve our strategic objective that focuses on removing barriers to learning, we offer excellent learner support and crèche facilities.

Learner and non-learner Information, Advice and Support

The Centre provides hands-on support, advice and encouragement, as many of the people we work with face difficulties that go well beyond their learning needs. Several of our learners have been through very traumatic experiences due to war or becoming refugees or are isolated from their families. The Centre is often seen as a first port of call for help by learners and others with a wide variety of problems and difficulties including accessing benefits, experiencing domestic violence, and dealing with immigration issues. Dealing with a complex society like ours is daunting for women with few language skills and little experience outside the home, or for those who have been traumatised by their current situation or recent history. For many women a simple referral to another agency is not enough.

This year our informal drop-in sessions have been face to face, online, and through telephone calls. So, although the Centre was closed for two terms and we were working from home, our IAG and outreach services did not stop. RCLC continued supporting women with accessing local services and getting expert help when they needed it, e.g., by making appointments, acting as a link between the user and the service, explaining what letters or forms are about, befriending telephone calls, translating and giving vital health information in regard to the pandemic, and sometimes acting as an advocate for a vulnerable user. Our evaluation work shows that the Centre's work breaks down isolation of the women and their families and helps them link into the wider community. In addition, there is evidence from the literature on global maternal literacy that shows that mothers who can speak, read and write in the language of the country they live in have healthier children who are more able to thrive in education themselves. Around 40% of our learners require additional support.

Building on the Centre's current support work with around 34 vulnerable ethnic minority women per month and others referred during Covid19. RCLC applied and successfully received grant funding from The Berkshire Community Foundation Grant For Social And Mental Health Support To BAME Women and The National Academy for Social Prescribing's 'Thriving Communities' fund (Wildbeing Project) to employ an ex-member of staff for 1 day pw to offer a listening ear and active signposting and referral service to those who with less extreme mental health issues, especially those requiring weekly support calls. This released the current outreach and support worker to further develop work with people, mainly women, with more extreme examples of stress, depression, and mental ill health from April 2021- Aug 2022. The role involved both telephone calls and distanced meetings outside. By adding a new member of staff to the team we were able to engage with 109 more women over the 3-month duration of the grant. The phone support for our elderly clients consisted of:

- Information, advice and guidance on Covid, vaccines, government guidelines on the pandemic, how to do lateral flow tests and where to get them, identifying and supporting women to get vaccinations and encouraging them to take part in online group chats about COVID-19;
- Providing Information about services (such as online food orders, getting medicine delivered to their home) not available in their first language.
- Providing information to help dispel myths about vaccines, COVID-19 and access to accurate and trusted health information in their first language;
- Translation support- form filling, translating utility bills and referrals to CommuniCare for benefit information support and translation support for refugees based at the local hotel with RRSg;
- Referrals to RVA social prescribers; and

- Providing mental health support over the phone by our trained mental health first aider and referring learners onto Talking Therapies, Adult Social Care and the Intercultural Psychological Clinic.

A total of 895 women were supported with information, advice and guidance (IAG) with support varying from benefit support, filling in forms, making telephone calls, translation support to accompanying them to access services at the Centre from April 2021- Mar 2022. Out of these women 39% of these were not RCLC learners and had been referred to us from friends, neighbours or other organisations. More recently we are also seeing an increase in the number of referrals from RVA Social prescribing.

Crèche

Alongside its other activities, the Centre provides a crèche which offers important support for children under 5 years old. It was wonderful to finally have the creche open from May 2021. We had to reduce the numbers in the creche to meet government guidelines, but it meant that those women who could not engage in learning could now do so.

Whilst the creche was closed the children missed out on creche support. Many of these children have had little social contact outside their family and almost all have no English language when they arrive. Some are unfamiliar with toys or have no experience of playing with other children. Others are living in, or have already lived through, extremely difficult circumstances, including as refugees or asylum seekers in hotels.

Through the crèche, children learn to speak English, to be confident separated from their mothers, and to take part in educational play which stimulates social, emotional, physical and intellectual development, in the care of a multicultural team of well-trained, loving workers. The crèche also helps to develop language skills and the ability to socialise and provides informal parenting advice and support. This provides crucial school readiness skills.

We currently employ two crèche workers and a crèche supervisor. In the academic year 2021/2022 133 children were able to access the creche.

On of our learners who found the creche to be a lifeline said,

“Thank you so much. I can't thank you enough for your excellent work. My son is very happy with you in the creche”

12. MAINTENANCE OF THE CENTRE

The Centre continues to be a comfortable and well-maintained environment for learners to attend. We have ensured that our IT equipment and software is kept up-to-date and we maintain robust security software. Considerable funds have been spent on maintaining security, fire equipment and alarms, safety lighting, electrical testing and gas heating maintenance in the building.

As a result of the changing government guidelines regarding safe working and learning environments meant that the robust Covid-19 Risk register was updated and reviewed before the start of each term. All staff and volunteers would also receive inductions on the risk register before the start of each term. Learners coming into the Centre were and still are given inductions on how to keep themselves and others safe at the Centre.

The inductions included general health and safety, how to use the Centre safely due to Covid-19 (keeping a safe distance, bringing in their own equipment, using hand sanitizers, using separate entrances, a one-way system, completing a health form, having their temp checked etc), wearing face masks, ventilation as well as the general induction info regarding the courses and how to use Zoom if the Centre closed down again.

The Centre has been fully open for the academic year 2021/2022. Maintenance of the building includes the annual checks for;

- fire alarms and carbon monoxide alarms
- PAT testing and electrics
- emergency lighting
- fire extinguishers
- cleaning
- heaters and boiler
- computer equipment, software, back up clouds and virus protection.
- Covid-19 PPE equipment, signage and lateral flow tests for staff and volunteers

In December 2020 a new boiler was finally installed at RCLC by the landlord. The previous boiler was very old and could no longer be repaired and had to be replaced.

Sadly, in September 2021 the charity SmartWorks (interview coaching and dressing support to help women get into employment) who rented the top floor at the Centre, moved out to new premises across the road as they needed more space and lift access. We were very sad to lose them as they were a wonderful charity to share the building with and we often referred our learners to them when they had job interviews. We still refer our learners to them but have so far been unsuccessful in finding new tenants for the top floor. Due to the increase in the number of learners wanting face to face to classes and to reduce waiting lists we added an extra English conversation class and so have converted one of the rooms on the top floor into a classroom to meet learner demand and need.

13. STAFFING

During 2021/22 we continued to employ a Centre Manager who has worked tirelessly to manage the team and, with the Trustees, promote and develop the work of the Centre. In addition, we continue to employ a part-time Programme Development/Outreach Support Worker, whose work has been invaluable in building relationships with other organisations, spreading the word about our service, recruiting new learners and supporting women on the phone, and running the community-based learning programme. Due to new grant funding we were also able to employ an additional 1-day per week outreach worker from April 2021 onwards to support our current outreach worker.

We currently employ 5 sessional tutors: a sewing tutor (for the sewing beginners and improvers classes), one beauty tutor for Looking Good Feeling Good, one English conversation tutor, one IT Tutor, one reading and writing and employability tutor. We also employ a part-time data administrator who records, inputs and analyses our learner data.

14. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Despite continuing to keep a tight control over our expenditure during the year, we are reporting a net expenditure in the region of £23,000 for 2021/22. This is in contrast with 2020/21 when we reported a net income of around £57,000.

We saw a positive net income in 2020/21 that was higher than in previous years due to both increased income and decreased expenditure during that financial year. This is due to some funding streams coming to an end during 2020/21, e.g., DCLG funds of around £38,000 a year. In addition to this, other income has reduced due to SmartWorks moving out of the top floor of our London Street premises in October 2021; this was generating income of roughly £19,000 per year and we have not found a replacement tenant.

The Centre's costs for 2020/21 were lower than usual as we were forced to close for a large portion of the year due to national lockdowns and restrictions. While many classes were moved online, it was not always possible to run courses in this way. For the year 2021/22 we have understandably seen an increase in costs. Most significantly, staff pay has increased due to increased hours worked and pay increases being awarded where appropriate, e.g. in line with National Living Wage levels and to ensure the pay we offer is fair and competitive. Utility bills have also increased compared with 2020/21 as the Centre has been open for most of 2021/22.

Income and expenditure figures are monitored monthly against the annual budget and reviewed by the Board at each meeting. We produce detailed cash flow forecasts every month, as we are aware of the importance of closely monitoring our financial position, particularly given the uncertainty we are all facing due to the continuing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. When contracts are due for review, every effort is made to ensure services are purchased from the most cost-effective source.

The Board and Centre Manager have been focusing on securing more long-term funding for the Centre and we are delighted to have secured some new funding from Big Lottery and Reading Borough Council during Summer 2022, which will greatly improve the Centre's financial security for the next few years

Reading Borough Council

The basis of Reading Community Learning Centre's contracts with Reading Borough Council (RBC) was changed during 2018/19. Funding from RBC consists of two strands of commissioned work (Closing the Gap outcomes 1 and 2) under employment and adult social care themes. From September 2022, the basis of our contracts with RBC will change again, although the two new strands of commissioned work are under similar themes as before. This money has and will continue to provide a valuable base, as it makes a substantial contribution towards our costs.

RBC also provided some one-off funding during 2021/22 to help with the impact of closure of the Centre during the pandemic (£10,000) and for Zumba classes (around £1,500).

New Directions

We have maintained our partnership work with New Directions and continue to receive Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) funding from them. Our core programme of first steps courses is part funded by New Directions for those learners who meet the enrolment eligibility criteria and complete the course.

Other Income

Other income has largely come from the use of the top floor of our London Street premises by SmartWorks, which generated around £10,000 worth of income during 2021/22 (£19,000 in 2020/21). Until they moved out in October 2021, SmartWorks contributed a third of our rent, buildings insurance and utility costs and paid the

rates on the top floor. Unfortunately, we have not found a replacement tenant although we are seeing increased demand for the Centre's services and have started to use the top floor ourselves.

We have seen the return to WEA using facilities at the Centre in 2021/22 to provide a complementary programme of ESOL progression and other introductory courses. This generated around £2,000 worth of income during the year. We received no such income during 2020/21 while the Centre was open, as we needed all available space to allow for social distancing.

Some of our other sources of income received during 2021/22 have been given below:

- The Henry Smith Charity has provided funding towards certain salaries, rent and other building costs.
- Garfield Weston Foundation has contributed towards our core costs.
- Earley Charity and Berkshire Community Foundation have provided funds for salaries.
- CPAR and Carewell Research projects have funded the costs of peer researchers.

As in previous years, other funding applications were made but were unsuccessful.

We continue to charge learners a small enrolment fee for each course and for the use of places in the crèche. Other fundraising events are held throughout the year.

Reserves Policy

The Board has examined the Charity Commission's requirements for reserves in the light of the main risks to the organisation. Originally, the Board had established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible assets would be held to cover 3 months' running costs, which with the current rent and salary levels now requires an amount of £55,000 to be held. We have been able to reach this level in the General Reserve.

Funds are also being held in designated reserves as follows:

- One has been set up for the designated purpose of staff costs (£33,000).
- A premises reserve (£19,500) has also been set up to cover redecoration costs under our lease, plus other premises costs for 2022/23 that are not covered by restricted or other designated funds.
- Finally, when the DCLG funding was moved to unrestricted funds in August 2020, the Board decided to spread this funding over the following three years rather than spend it all during 2021/22. A reserve of £48,000 was set up to reflect the portion of these funds we are planning to spend in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Having this funding set aside allows for the fact that sources of future funding are uncertain.

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2022
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the Board of Trustees, as the company directors on 13 September 2022 and signed on the Board's behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Reading Community Learning Centre		
On accounts for the year ended	31 st March 2022	Charity no (if any)	1123017
Set out on pages	1-2		

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date: 19th September
2022

Name: Rachel Eden

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

ACMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants)

Address:

Holy Brook Associates, Curious Lounge, 1st Floor, Pinnacle Building,
Tudor Road, Reading, England,
RG1 1NH

Section B

Disclosure

NONE

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 06442616 (England and Wales)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1123017

Unaudited Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2022

for

Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Statement of Financial Activities
(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 March 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2022 Total Funds £	2021 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM					
Charitable activities	2				
Grants – Core programme		15,000	89,453	104,453	147,147
Grants – Community education		-	8,715	8,715	-
Grants – Covid-19 costs		10,000	1,500	11,500	15,996
Courses		3,250	-	3,250	13,641
Crèche		-	5,000	5,000	-
Total charitable activities		28,250	104,668	132,918	176,784
Donations and legacies		8,057	-	8,057	3,653
Other income	3	11,544	-	11,544	19,440
Total income		47,851	104,668	152,519	199,877
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Building costs		51,041	12,788	63,829	59,562
Office costs		2,828	348	3,176	2,250
Programme costs		5,136	39,929	45,066	27,653
Staffing		16,740	45,951	62,691	53,257
Independent examination		380	-	380	373
Total expenditure		76,124	99,017	175,142	143,096
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(28,273)	5,651	(22,623)	56,782
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		195,976	53,545	249,521	192,738
Movements between restricted and unrestricted funds	7	309	(309)	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		168,011	58,887	226,898	249,519

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2022 Total Funds £	2021 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	8	3,372	-	3,372	2,777
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	11,468	3,954	15,422	12,842
Cash at bank		160,098	88,053	248,151	249,291
Total current assets		171,566	92,007	263,573	262,133
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	10	(6,928)	(33,121)	(40,048)	(15,392)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		164,638	58,886	223,524	246,742
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		168,010	58,886	226,896	249,519
NET ASSETS		168,010	58,886	226,896	249,519
FUNDS	12				
Unrestricted funds				168,011	195,976
Restricted funds				58,886	53,545
TOTAL FUNDS				226,898	249,521

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2022 – continued

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2022.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- a) Ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Section 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- b) Preparing financial statements, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 13 September 2022 and were signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP FRS 102 (second edition) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The charity has taken advantage of the disclosure exemptions applicable to smaller charities.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Going Concern

The board of trustees considers that the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate because there are no material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life. In the year of acquisition, depreciation is recorded based on the number of months the asset is in service.

Improvements to property	Straight line over 1 year
Furniture, fixtures & fittings	25% on reducing balance
Computer equipment	33% on cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)**Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the board of trustees. Designated funds are unrestricted funds which have been allocated by the Board for particular purposes.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes.

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

2. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Activity	2022	2021
		£	£
Grants	Core programme	104,453	147,147
Grants	Crèche	5,000	-
Grants	Research projects	8,715	-
Registration fees	Courses	3,250	2,156
MHFA courses	Courses	-	11,485
Grants	Covid-19 costs	11,500	15,996
		132,918	176,784

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	2022	2021
	£	£
Reading Borough Council	36,750	36,750
Reading Borough Council – Building Closure	10,000	-
Reading Borough Council – Covid-19	-	2,678
Reading Borough Council – Zumba	1,470	-
Furlough payments	-	1,318
New Directions (NLDC)	12,000	8,000
DCLG	-	38,340
Henry Smith	32,233	31,667
Garfield Weston	15,000	15,000
Big Lottery Covid-19 grant	-	10,000
AB Charitable Trust	-	15,000
Earley Charity	5,000	2,000
BWCCG and RVA grant	5,000	2,390
Berkshire Community Foundation grants	3,500	-
CPAR Research Project	4,452	-
Carewell Research Project	4,263	-
	129,668	163,143

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

3. OTHER INCOME

	2022	2021
	£	£
Rent receivable	9,720	19,440
Room and facilities hire	1,824	-
	<u>11,544</u>	<u>19,440</u>

4. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income /(expenditure) is slated after charging /(crediting):

	2022	2021
	£	£
Depreciation – owned assets	1,536	1,114
Other operating leases	720	720
Independent Examiner remuneration	380	373
	<u>2,636</u>	<u>2,207</u>

The Independent Examiner did not undertake any other work for the charity.

5. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

During the year to 31 March 2022 two of the trustees were paid for work they did outside of their trustee duties.

Hemamalini Sundharajan was paid a total of £4,159 (£1,199 2020/21). This is for her work as an outreach worker (£3,483) and as a researcher (£676). A laptop worth £400 was provided for conducting this work during the year to 31 March 2021, although this is property of the Centre and will be returned. Hemamalini's outreach work was funded by the BWCCG and RVA grant and the Berkshire Community Foundation grant. Her work as a researcher was funded by the CPAR Research Project grant.

Simran Aul received £750 (£308 2020/21) for teaching online seated exercises classes during the year. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council Lot 12.1 "Outreach & Community Education".

Raya Mohamed was paid £587 for working in the creche during the year. This was to provide cover for regular creche staff. The majority of this (£485) was paid for using funding from Earley Charity with the remainder (£102) coming from general funds.

Trustees' expenses

Simran Aul was reimbursed a total of £173 during the year ended 31 March 2022. These expenses cover her monthly Zoom subscriptions, which are required for her to teach online seated exercise classes. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council Lot 12.1 "Outreach & Community Education".

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

6. STAFF COSTS

	2022	2021
	£	£
Wages and salaries	103,611	81,404
Social security costs	1,127	37
Other pension costs	2,680	2,367
	<u>107,418</u>	<u>83,808</u>

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2022	2021
Crèche	3	3
Tutor	6	6
Outreach and Support Worker	2	1
Manager	1	1
Administrator	1	1
	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>

No member of staff was paid more than £60,000 in the year.

Key management personnel

The charity considers its key management personnel to comprise the trustees and Aisha Malik, the office manager.

7. FUNDING FROM DCLG CONTROLLING MIGRATION

During the year 2020/21, the charity received a grant of £38,340 from DCLG Controlling Migration and also had carried forward grant from 2019/20. Some of this funding was used towards the running costs of the Centre during 2020/21, however it was clear that there would be an underspend of this grant. It was confirmed in August 2020 that the remaining grant could be transferred to unrestricted funds and used towards the running costs of the Centre.

Much of the DCLG underspend has been put in a designated reserve titled "DCLG (2022-24)" as the board plans to use this funding over a few years. See Note 12 for further details.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Improvements to property £	Furniture, fixtures & fittings £	Computer & other equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2021	9,224	4,264	19,612	33,100
Additions	-	1,000	1,259	2,259
Disposals	-	(504)	(8,989)	(9,493)
At 31 March 2022	9,224	4,760	11,882	25,865
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2021	9,224	3,418	17,681	30,323
Disposals	-	(376)	(8,989)	(9,365)
Charge for year	-	180	1,357	1,536
At 31 March 2022	9,224	3,221	10,048	22,494
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2022	-	1,538	1,833	3,372
At 31 March 2021	-	846	1,931	2,777

9. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade debtors	4,220	1,104
Accrued income	1,584	1,958
Prepayments	9,618	9,780
	15,422	12,842

10. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE TO WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2022 £	2021 £
Social security and social taxes	1,586	-
Other creditors	10,619	-
Deferred Income	25,732	14,133
Accrued expenses	2,112	1,258
	40,048	15,392

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

11. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2022	2021
	£	£
Within one year	36,000	36,000
Between one and five years	-	36,000
	<u>36,000</u>	<u>72,000</u>

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 01/04/2021	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2022
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	18,398	(26,695)	20,809	12,511
General Reserve	53,000	-	2,000	55,000
Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)	1,578	(1,578)	-	-
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	42,000	-	(9,000)	33,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	33,000	-	(13,500)	19,500
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	48,000	-	-	48,000
	<u>195,976</u>	<u>(28,273)</u>	<u>309</u>	<u>168,011</u>
Restricted funds				
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	5,338	(5,338)	-	-
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	11,524	(192)	-	11,331
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	26,735	2,524	-	29,260
Reading Borough Council – Zumba	-	-	-	-
Inner Wheel	2,567	(2,566)	-	-
Henry Smith	(2,531)	7,676	-	5,145
Awards4All	2,450	(2,450)	-	-
Earley Charity	-	1,773	-	1,773
BWCCG and RVA grants	871	3,100	-	3,971
Berkshire Community Foundation	-	309	(309)	-
CPAR Research Project	-	315	-	315
Carewell Research Project	-	3,721	-	3,721
MHFA courses	6,592	(3,221)	-	3,370
	<u>53,545</u>	<u>5,651</u>	<u>(309)</u>	<u>58,886</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>249,521</u>	<u>(22,623)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>226,898</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

The movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	47,851	(74,546)	(26,695)
Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)	-	(1,578)	(1,578)
	47,851	(76,124)	(28,273)
Restricted funds			
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	12,000	(17,338)	(5,338)
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	23,500	(23,692)	(192)
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	13,250	(10,726)	2,524
Reading Borough Council – Zumba	1,470	(1,470)	-
Inner Wheel	-	(2,566)	(2,566)
Henry Smith	32,233	(24,558)	7,676
Awards4All	-	(2,450)	(2,450)
Earley Charity	5,000	(3,227)	1,773
BWCCG and RVA grants	5,000	(1,900)	3,100
Berkshire Community Foundation	3,500	(3,191)	309
CPAR Research Project	4,452	(4,136)	315
Carewell Research Project	4,263	(542)	3,721
MHFA courses	-	(3,221)	(3,221)
	104,668	(99,017)	5,651
TOTAL FUNDS	152,519	(175,142)	(22,623)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued**2020/21 Comparatives for movement in funds**

	At 01/04/2020	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31/03/2021
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted Funds				
General Fund	5,417	27,784	(14,803)	18,398
General Reserve	50,000	-	3,000	53,000
Designated Reserve (Smartworks)	1,578	-	-	1,578
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	28,000	-	14,000	42,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	20,000	-	13,000	33,000
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	-	-	48,000	48,000
	104,995	27,784	63,197	195,976
Restricted Funds				
Co-Operative Group	3,401	(82)	(3,319)	-
DCLG Controlling Migration	45,252	17,249	(62,501)	-
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	(962)	6,300	-	5,338
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	5,738	5,786	-	11,524
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	22,531	4,204	-	26,735
Reading Borough Council – Covid-19	-	184	(184)	-
Inner Wheel	3,461	(894)	-	2,567
Tampon Tax	9,604	(9,511)	(93)	-
Henry Smith	(3,731)	1,200	-	(2,531)
Awards4All	2,450	-	-	2,450
Big Lottery Covid-19 grant	-	-	-	-
Earley Charity	-	-	-	-
BWCCG and RVA grant	-	871	-	871
MHFA courses	-	3,692	2,900	6,592
	87,744	28,998	(63,197)	53,545
TOTAL FUNDS	192,739	56,782	-	249,521

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

2020/21 comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted Funds			
General Fund	56,567	(31,683)	24,884
Restricted Funds			
Co-Operative Group	-	(82)	(82)
DCLG Controlling Migration	38,340	(21,091)	17,249
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	8,000	(1,700)	6,300
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	23,500	(17,714)	5,786
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	13,250	(9,046)	4,204
Reading Borough Council – Covid-19	2,678	(2,494)	184
Inner Wheel	-	(894)	(894)
Tampon Tax	-	(9,511)	(9,511)
Henry Smith	31,667	(30,467)	1,200
Awards4All	-	-	-
Big Lottery Covid-19 grant	10,000	(10,000)	-
Earley Charity	2,000	(2,000)	-
BWCCG and RVA grant	2,390	(1,519)	871
MHFA courses	8,585	(4,894)	3,692
	140,410	(111,412)	28,998
TOTAL FUNDS	196,977	(143,096)	53,882

There were a number of transfers between funds during the year. All were approved by the trustees and, where appropriate, the funder. More details are given below.

General Reserve

The Board has set aside £55,000 to cover three months' working capital requirements and three months' rent payments. This is in line with the Centre's reserving policy.

Designated Reserve (Staffing)

An amount of £33,000 has been set aside from the General Reserve to cover around three months' worth of staffing costs.

Designated Reserve (Premises)

An amount of £19,500 has been put aside to cover redecoration of the premises in line with the terms and conditions of the lease and other general premises costs for 2022/23 that are not covered by restricted funds. This reserve has decreased slightly from last year as some of the DCLG designated reserve will cover premises-related costs.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)

A small designated reserve was held to show the deposit paid by SmartWorks Reading on their rental of premises. This reserve is no longer required as at 31 March 2022, since SmartWorks moved out in October 2021 and the deposit was returned.

Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)

During the year to 31 March 2021, we were allowed to take underspent restricted funds of around £62,500 from DCLG into unrestricted funds, with the permission of DCLG. The Board decided to spread this unrestricted funding over a number of years rather than spend it all during 2021/22. The designated reserve of £48,000 has been set up to use during financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Henry Smith

There was a small deficit of £2,531 shown in the Henry Smith restricted fund as at 31 March 2021. This related to a slight mismatch in the pro-rated income received from Henry Smith and the pattern of expenditure from these restricted funds towards the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

A sum of £15,950 was received in late January 2021, which covered 1 February to 31 July 2021. This income was pro-rated in the financial statements since only part of it related to the 2021/22 financial year. However, slightly more than the pro-rated grant was spent in February and March 2021 on costs relating to the year ended 31 March 2021.

The deficit shown was cleared during the year ended 31 March 2022 when the deferred income was unwound, and further instalments were received. Income and expenditure relating to all sources of funding are monitored carefully by the Centre Manager and Treasurer to ensure that no permanent deficits emerge.

13. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There are no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2022.

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

England & Wales - Charity number 1123017

Accounts

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2021
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

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READING COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE LTD

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2021. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities', effective 1 January 2019.

The Trustees have complied with the duty in section 17(5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Company number
6442616 (England and Wales)

Registered Charity number
1123017

Registered office
94 London Street
Reading RG1 4SJ

Trustees

Katharine Sarah del Tufo
Linda Smith
Stephen Harland- resigned 14/9/2021
Karen Rowland
Lucy England
Raya Mohamed
Jennifer Theron
Rosie Chambers
Simran Aul-date appointed 24/11/2020
Shahanaz Uddin appointed 1/12/2020
Hemamalini Sundararajan appointed 24/11/2020
Clare Furneaux- appointed 12/6/2020

Parveen Brar - staff representative

Company Secretary

Aisha Malik (Centre Manager)

Independent examiner

Holy Brook Associates

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

Reading Community Learning Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated and registered as a charity. The company was incorporated on 3 December 2007 and registered as a charity on 29 February 2008 under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and it is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up its members are required to contribute a sum not exceeding £10 towards any outstanding debts.

The Board of Directors

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charitable law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles, one third of the directors must retire from office each year but can offer themselves up for re-election at the Annual General Meeting.

Board members provide a wide range of financial, HR, life experience and business and management skills. Board meetings are held at approximately six weekly intervals. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction and policies of the organisation. Sub-groups have been formed to take forward the work on learner engagement, and fundraising. The Centre Manager and a Tutor representative attend Board meeting in an advisory capacity. Day to day responsibility for the running of the organisation and the provision of services is delegated to the Centre Manager under the direction of the Board.

Recruitment, appointment, and induction of trustees

When a potential new Board member approaches the organisation, they are invited first to a meeting with the Chair and Centre Manager at which the work of the organisation and the contribution of the trustees can be discussed. If there is mutual agreement that the applicant should continue with their application, they will be provided with appropriate written information about the organisation and the roles and responsibilities of trustees, and they may be invited to provide a CV, and attend a Board meeting as an observer. Their application will be discussed by the trustees and if appropriate they will be formally invited to join the Board. Further induction and training will be organised on an individual basis according to the specific needs of the appointee. Trustee packs are given to all new Trustees.

Members

Reading Community Learning Centre is a membership organisation. There are currently 57 members, mainly longstanding supporters of the work of the Centre. Reading Community Learning Centre's Board is accountable to its members for the operation of the organisation in line with its stated objectives. Members receive a report on the Centre's work and progress at least annually, and they are eligible to vote at general meetings of the organisation.

Risk management

The Directors have a responsibility to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to manage the finances effectively and guard against fraud. A number of measures and protocols have been established which aim to safeguard the finances of the Centre and to provide satisfactory systems in all areas of work which expose the charity to risk. The Board of Directors has continued to take a conservative approach to financial decisions during this year of the charity's life and has aimed to establish an appropriate reserve of funds as advised by the Charity Commission. A full risk register is maintained and reviewed at Board Meetings and staff are regularly reminded of the operational risks. Since early March 2020, the Centre Manager has developed an additional Covid19 Risk register and set of protocols.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

The Centre's objectives are, for the benefit of the public in the Reading area:

1. The relief of poverty and the needs of those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, in particular women and children and those from minority ethnic communities. This is done, for example, by:
 - a. providing general education and training, including language skills and other basic skills, to advance them in life and/or assist them to adapt within a new community; and
 - b. providing or assisting them in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, financial hardship or social circumstances with the objects of improving their conditions of life and relieving the effects of isolation.
2. To promote racial and religious harmony and raise awareness about, and to promote good relations between, persons of different racial and religious groups.
3. To advance the education of the public about issues relating to migrants, those seeking asylum and/or granted refugee status to help promote knowledge, mutual understanding and mutual and good relations between them.
4. To relieve financial hardship among people living or working in the Reading area by providing information, advice and support.

The Board has referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

The Board has developed a new 2-year strategic plan 2021-2023, and revised its vision, mission, aims and objectives:

Vision

Marginalised ethnic minority women in Reading achieving their individual hopes and fulfilling their aspirations.

Mission

Reading Community Learning Centre:

- offers marginalised ethnic minority women opportunities for social, educational, integration, and volunteering activities;
- provides services that address barriers to learning.
- supports progression into further education, social and employment opportunities, and
- encourages these women to raise their issues and concerns and engage with agencies.

Aims

Reading Community Learning Centre aims to enable marginalised ethnic minority women to be skilled, confident active citizens who contribute to society.

Overall objectives

1. To provide safe, first step educational opportunities for excluded ethnic minority women- for example:
 - building their confidence and independence;
 - developing language skills;
 - pre-employment skills; and
 - getting them started on journeys towards further education and employment.

2. To support the progression of ethnic minority women onto further education, volunteering or work activities for example:
 - working with other organisations to ensure a clear pathway into further education;
 - providing supported volunteering opportunities in the centre and access volunteering opportunities in other organisations;
 - working with employers; and
 - supporting the development of internal social enterprise within RCLC.
3. Through outreach and research work in communities, engage women who face cultural, religious and social barriers in learning and integration.
4. To provide holistic women-centred support and advice that focuses on each women's individual needs. This will remove barriers to learning, integration and employment and support progression- for example:
 - free classes at convenient times during school hours;
 - access to a free crèche;
 - referral onto other organisations;
 - help with filling in forms;
 - advising how to access services; and
 - Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on educational and employment progression.
5. To break down barriers between people from different cultures and to foster mutual support, respect, understanding and friendship. This will contribute to integration and community cohesion.
6. To provide opportunities for learners to influence the work and direction of the Centre. To allow learners to voice their issues and concerns to external agencies on issues that affect their lives- for example, learner forums, local consultations for health, police and other agencies.
7. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built in support at the Centre, as well as recruiting host community volunteers, supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression. This will support learning, friendship, and integration.
8. To work with marginalised ethnic minority men alongside women when culturally appropriate or a particular need is identified.
9. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners.

Strategic objectives 2020- 2021

1. To raise at least the budgeted amounts of additional funding and to continue to diversify funding incomes types, including income generation from the building; to strengthen the fundraising capacity of the Centre with a focus on strengthening the management resources and seeking stable core funding.
2. To provide a core programme for a minimum of 270 learners per annum, involving recruitment, assessment, delivery and IAG and signposting support to learners.
3. To continue to review the strategic objectives 2019-2021, the Centre's annual Action plan, and the Centre's future development; and seek to continue needs assessment work.
4. To continue developing the RCLC learner VOICE to improve the involvement of learners in the work and development of the Centre. This will nurture the learners' confidence and skills, so they can speak out about issues that affect their lives.

5. To continue identifying ways in which women's issues and rights, that are relevant to the empowerment of women who use the Centre, can inform the services offered by RCLC. To embed these within the existing courses and maintain links with relevant organisations.
6. To further improve and strengthen the marketing and communication of the Centre as a source of support, advice and signposting to learners, and other communities and organisations
7. To continue to develop opportunities for learners to volunteer with built in support at the Centre, as well as recruiting host community volunteers, supporting learning, employment friendship and integration, and tracking of progression. To continue to develop integration opportunities with host community members and groups. To increase cultural awareness, reduce isolation, encourage English practice and promote friendships.
8. To continue to build strategic partnerships with appropriate voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations to provide strengthened services and opportunities for learners

THE WORK OF THE CENTRE

Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) exists to help marginalised women from ethnic minority backgrounds to achieve their individual potential. The majority of the women we support are migrants or asylum seekers who speak little or no English, and often have limited contact outside of the home. No matter what barriers a woman faces we work alongside her as she overcomes obstacles to realising her aspirations. For many women, this includes improving their English, volunteering locally, gaining qualifications or securing a job.

Based in central Reading, we offer a programme of outreach activities, training classes, workshops and social opportunities at our Centre. These are designed to build confidence, increase skills and reduce the social isolation of local BAME women, many of whom are amongst the most isolated, deprived and vulnerable in our community. In 2020/2021, we supported 196 women from 35 different countries. Our model encourages community cohesion, breaks down barriers between cultures, and fosters mutual respect amongst the women. No other service in Reading reaches such a diverse group of women, giving us a unique insight into the needs of local BAME communities.

Reading Community Learning Centre provides informal education and support for women who are unable to access more mainstream services because of the educational, social or cultural barriers they face. Some of the women who come to the Centre have had little access to formal education, most do not speak English, and sometimes they are not literate in their own language. Almost all the migrant and refugee learners face cultural and other challenges, and for some the Centre offers their only contact outside their immediate family. The Centre's unique success has been in making learning accessible to the hardest to reach learners through a community-based approach, built on gaining the trust of often isolated communities and designing courses and services to meet their needs.

RCLC's educational provision creates ways into education for the most tentative and least confident of learners. Women with very limited language and literacy skills can take their first steps into learning here and women who have gained qualifications in their countries of birth can access support to develop their English skills. This may mean coming to a social activity, joining an English conversation class or learning English through one of several practical creative classes. Learners are drawn from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The development of cross-cultural friendships is one of the most important benefits for many RCLC learners.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC FROM MARCH 2020

In March 2020 we had to close the Centre one week early in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic in line with UK government advice. This meant we had to quickly move to running classes online and supporting learners and others through weekly telephone calls following the Easter break in April 2020 in addition to training our staff and setting the tutors up with zoom and mobile phones. Thanks to the support of Connect Reading and Focus Group Ltd, RCLC were able to purchase 7 new mobiles for staff so that they could stay in touch with learners, deliver classes and respond to enquiries from home enabling learning and outreach support to continue. During March and April 2020, the Centre created a new digital and classroom-based programme to support our learners online from the Summer term in 2020. For RCLC to be able to provide its services over the summer term 2020 the following changes in our delivery of classes and support were made;

1. All classes were taught online via zoom or through smaller Whats App video groups. The latter was for those learners without any access to laptops or tablets, and who were taught in small groups of three.
2. All learners were enrolled face to face keeping social distance and using PPE. At the enrolment stage all learners were given a detailed induction on health and safety, online safety, how to log into zoom for their classes, how to use Whats App video, the current Covid-19 protocols, and where to get support if they had symptoms of Covid-19.
3. Prior to the classes starting all tutors had an online in-house zoom training session, received the Covid-19 risk register training, the online teaching guidelines training for RCLC, and were given mobile phones. New policies for the Covid-19 risk register and a code of practice for online teaching for staff were formalised in April 2020.
4. All enrolled learners had their own classroom Whats App video chat groups to learn, post homework and use to connect with the tutor and stay in touch with friends from the class.
5. RCLC tutors chose whether to use Zoom or Whats App video platforms to teach their subject as this was dependent on the learners who had been enrolled and what their digital needs and abilities were.
6. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses for the community and voluntary sector funded by RBC were developed from new online teaching materials and training released by Mental Health First Aid England. These courses were primarily for employees of DWP, RBC and the VCS sector who were supporting people with financial difficulties over the pandemic.
7. RCLC successfully stayed in contact with our most vulnerable learners over the phone during the time that face to face support was not possible. The outreach work continued virtually and over the phone, allowing the outreach worker to check in on learners once a week to make sure that they were safe, healthy or if they needed anything like groceries, medicine or other support which we could refer them to. Shaheen Kausar (outreach worker) was given a new mobile phone so any ethnic minority migrant or refugee women who needed support and advice could connect with Shaheen whilst she was working from home.
8. RCLC stayed in contact with the elderly learners from the PCC and Warehouse and the elderly Nepalese ladies from the ESOL Skills for Health Courses. Friendly phone chats were arranged once a week to support them and reduce loneliness and isolation. These calls provided the latest health information regarding the pandemic and in supporting them to access the services they needed as they were on the shielding list and housebound.
9. RCLC regularly liaised with staff on the changing needs in the community so that we could respond appropriately and quickly.
10. The creche sadly had to be closed over the summer term in 2020 and staff had to be furloughed. The creche reopened in the autumn 2020 term following the change in government guidelines.

Thanks to the grant we received from Reading Borough Council we were able to purchase PPE equipment, pay for extra cleaning hours and have our building deep cleaned prior to the start of the autumn term in 2020. We were able to safely meet the required standards as stipulated in our Covid-19 Risk Register. Without this grant we would have struggled to provide a safe learning and working environment for staff, learners and volunteers. It is thanks to this grant that we were able to operate our face to face services again, which was vitally important to so many ethnic minority women who were isolated and vulnerable over the lockdown period.

RCLC continues to experience an increase in demand as we support women and their families through the pandemic. Many have experienced disproportionate challenges and difficulties around mental and physical health, loss of finance, social isolation and domestic abuse,- compounded by language barriers and racism.

During the pandemic, RCLC has had to change and adapt its ways of working. We have launched a new blended online and face-to-face programme, and provided additional weekly telephone support to 30+ vulnerable learners per month. During the year, the Centre has been open whenever this was legal and safe for learners, with staff working from home when necessary.

Although we were successfully able to adapt our services to deliver learning, IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) and outreach support online it was just the same as face-to-face support. RCLC faced many challenges over this period which included;

- a) Rising waiting lists for the English classes. Pre-pandemic these were 10-15 people; this rose to 24 people on each language course during the period we were closed and has not declined since. This was because we had to run online or smaller face to face classes to meet the social distancing rules and Covid 19 risk register guidelines for RCLC.

Our learners also faced additional challenges:

- Learners who did not have access to equipment (smartphone, tablet or computer) that they could use to learn online
- Learners who had no access to the internet, or very limited, poor signal strength
- Learners who did not know how to use Zoom or other online learning platforms
- Learners' language barriers, which made it harder to access the learning online
- Learners feeling a lack of connection through online learning – the learners wanted to see the teacher and get the one-to-one support they would in a class. They missed the additional holistic support from the centre and being able to make new friends and getting to know new people, which they simply could not do online. Learning this way was just not the same.
- The advice and guidance sessions from our outreach worker and guest speakers did continue online but it was not the same. Building supportive relationships and connections were harder without body language, eye contact and smiles and gestures, which cannot be done over the phone. The relationships that help clients feel comfortable, at ease and able to talk more freely take much longer over the phone.

RCLC was able to deliver some classes face to face in the autumn 2020 term. This was for:

- i) practical courses such as sewing and beauty, and
- ii) those who had very little basic English and IT skills and who could not learn online.

- b) The Learners did not experience the same reduction in loneliness and isolation using online discussions as they would have face to face. This has made it harder for them to make friends across cultures and has reduced the learner's improvements in their mental and physical health. Peer support was far harder online.
- c) Some learners do not have a private and safe home environment in which to learn in. It can be hard to speak freely and express themselves when as they are surrounded by family and people who can listen in.
- d) Women were deterred from joining online classes due to the pressures of caring for their families, time taken up home schooling, and family decisions to prioritise giving laptops and other equipment to children or to their partners. Women lacked the ability to take time for themselves.
- e) Learners and staff feeling overwhelmed by Covid 19 and the lockdown situation.

Covid 19 has further exposed some of the health and wider inequalities that persist in our society. The virus itself has had a disproportionate impact on certain sections of the population, including those living in most deprived neighbourhoods and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

There is emerging evidence that the pandemic has increased BAME women's mental health support needs along with increased domestic abuse. Just under four in ten (36%) adults in Britain reported that during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown they have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety. Two in ten (21%) said that they have been finding lockdown difficult to cope with, while 14% said that social isolation was making 'relationships at home more difficult than usual'. This last figure rose to one in five (19%) for BME groups. A recent Red Cross Report identifies that following lockdown the situation has worsened for BAME people. Runnymede Trust report that in their survey over a third of BAME people (36%) have experienced an increase in stress or anxiety during the coronavirus crisis, with one out of five struggling with social isolation.

The detrimental experience of racism has continued to be a strong theme throughout this pandemic, with Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean and Chinese groups reporting either an increase in racial attacks or abuse, or 'being treated unfairly because of their ethnicity', since the start of the coronavirus crisis.

The feedback from learners in our online classes highlighted how the pandemic had had a devastating impact on their mental health and increased loneliness. Many of them felt that;

- They were lonelier, more depressed and had worse physical and mental health because they could not attend classes, social activities, or access support and friendship.
- Shielding in homes -with elders, home-schooling, depression meant that they felt unable to raise alarms, and exacerbated their mental health problems as they had no privacy.
- There was a lack of access to culturally appropriate food packages.
- Language barriers and lack of IT equipment and technical skills affected access to GP services and medication online
- Women who were shielding and whose families could not visit experienced more domestic violence, and culturally they felt obliged to stay at home to look after the elderly in their home and not report any issues.

Despite some longer-term funding from Henry Smith and Garfield, COVID-19 has impacted our core funding. So, drawing on funder feedback, the Board started in March to develop a 2-year strategic plan to:

1. Build financial resilience and diversify funding by

- recruiting a part-time business development manager;
- seeking either to move to cheaper shared premises or negotiate reduced rent;
- building a new strategic vision for 2022-2024 by commissioning an organisational review.

2. Respond to the urgent need to address isolation and focus on the mental health needs of learners; find the women who are most often invisible to other services by

- recruiting a part-time mental health first aid trained social prescriber/outreach worker;
- collaborating more closely with partner organisations

During the year 2021-22 work started leading to:

- Wildbeing partnership;
- Community Participatory Action Research Statutory/VCS partnership funded by Health Education England and Public Health England SE; and
- Carewell Research Partnership with University of Reading.

We will report on these in the next annual report.

GROWING PARTNERSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC

- Being part of local steering groups and forums (Reading Voluntary Action's Voluntary Community Sector Together; RVA/ RBC VCS Leaders' meetings and Hub; Hate Crime, Mental health, and Loneliness and Isolation forums).
- Now working more closely with Utulivu and Action for Cohesion and Racial Equality ACRE on mental health issues and RCLC is part of ACRE's community champion group.
- Through the Vaccine Support Group, we hold webinar sessions on COVID-19, give information on accessing vaccines, translate information, and promote the vaccine centres.
- RCLC also regularly attended many council and VCS led steering groups during the pandemic such as the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, The Reading COVID-19 Outbreak Engagement Board, The Reading and West Berkshire Employment Forum, RVA Readifriends Forum, The RVA Social Prescribing Forum, The Loneliness and Social Isolation Steering Group, The RBC Health Inequalities Meeting (linking into the Health and Wellbeing Board strategy), The RBC led Mental Wellbeing group, The RBC Led Older Peoples Working Group Meetings, The One Reading Hub VCS Leaders Meetings and The Volunteer Development Group Meetings.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Narrowing The Gap (NTG) partnership moved to supporting service users and others experiencing stress, loneliness social isolation. Our two-service level agreement lots with RBC, 12.1 (titled, Facilitating Peer Support and Reducing Social Isolation For Adults At Risk Because of Language and Cultural Barriers in partnership with CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group) and Lot 1.3 (titled, Steps Towards Employment in partnership with CommuniCare and Reading Refugee Support Group) continued to run online over the pandemic.

RBC Lot 12.1

We were unable to run any classes for the elderly Pakistani, Indian and Nepali women who were on the shielding list with underlying health conditions and were housebound from March to November 2020. Face to face exercise classes, ESOL Skills for Health, trips and language classes were not feasible due to their increased vulnerability. Learning and engaging in online classes was harder due to the language barrier, a lack of confidence, and a lack of IT equipment and knowledge. We therefore changed our support to providing regular befriending phone calls every week, to remain in contact with the ladies and provide them with outreach support over the phone. This part of our work increased over the pandemic which meant that we needed to employ an additional outreach worker to support Shaheen from Dec 2020.

From Nov 2020 our yoga tutor was able to run an online seated yoga class for elderly Pakistani and Indian women. Over the academic year 2020/2021 we have been able to run two hugely successful online seated yoga classes for a total of 47 Indian and Pakistani women. We will continue to run these online until the women feel ready to start face to face classes again. This was a huge accomplishment for them as they had never even used a computer before, let alone Zoom. It was a real boost to their confidence, physical and mental health. Some comments from the learners;

"The sessions are delivered in excellent way & given an opportunity to stretch muscle. The sessions help to contribute to my physical & emotional wellbeing. I would not like to miss these sessions & AM comfortable doing them online."

"It is the best exercise I get in lockdown. At my age of 70, I need to do stretching exercises. I will strongly recommend these sessions to continue."

"Exercising with Simran is great way to improve health along with having fun. My happiness levels have increased & I would definitely like to do the online exercises."

Course Programme

Thanks to grants and contracts from Reading Borough Council, NLDC Grant from New Directions, The DCLG Controlling Migration Grant, The Co-Op Local Community Fund, Inner Wheel, Tampon Tax Grant (Berkshire Community Foundation), Mars Goodness Knows Grant (Berkshire Community Foundation), The Gerald Palmer Trust, The Garfield Weston Foundation, The Alchemy Foundation, The Henry Smith Charity, Awards For All Grant, The AB Charitable Trust, The Earley Charity, The Berkshire West CCG Grant, The Big Lottery Covid-19 Grant and rental income from WEA and Smart Works, we have been able to run a sustained programme of activities throughout the year.

CORE PROGRAMMES RUN IN 2020-2021

In total we have had 156 women who have completed our core programmes between April 2020 and Mar 2021. Throughout the 2020/2021 financial year due to government guidelines some terms were taught completely online whilst others had a mixture of online and face to face classes.

Summer 2020 (all classes were taught completely online due to COVID-19 restrictions)

- English Conversation Beginners and Improvers
- English Reading and Writing beginners
- Sewing Beginners, and Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good Improvers
- Employability course for men and women

Autumn 2020 (mixture of online and face to face classes)

- English Conversation Beginners (face to face classes) and Improvers (online classes)
- English Reading and Writing beginners (online classes) and Improvers (face to face classes)
- Sewing Beginners and Improvers (face to face classes)
- Looking Good Feeling Good (face to face classes)
- Employability course for men and women (online classes)
- Beginners IT (face to face classes)

Spring 2021 (all classes were taught completely online due to COVID-19 restrictions)

- English Conversation Beginners and two Improvers classes
- English Reading and Writing Improvers
- Looking Good Feeling Good
- Employability course for men and women

Alongside our core programme of classes, we also ran Awards for All's funded programme 'Empowering Women Through Physical Activity' with Zumba. The popular Zumba classes started in January 2019, and were very successful, with 19 women in the weekly exercise class. Sadly, due to the lockdown we had to stop all of the exercise classes in March 2020. The Zumba classes were able to finally restart on 3/11/2020 but only online due to government restrictions. The last Zumba class finished in spring 2021.

Syrian Refugees

The Centre has worked closely with the Reading Refugee Support Group in helping the families, especially the women, access ESOL classes and community resources. A representative from the Centre has regularly attended the Reading Borough Council Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme Case Management Group. Over the pandemic there were no SVPR Meeting or new families who could arrive in Reading due to the government guidelines around the pandemic.

Improving citizen engagement – learners engaging with agencies about issues that affect their lives

A total of 845 women were seen at drop ins by our IAG level 3 accredited advisors, Shaheen and Petra either face to face or online for the academic year 2020/2021. This is in addition to our core programmes which ran in 20/21. At these drop-in sessions they were given information advice and guidance (IAG) over the phone or in person on various topics such as benefits, housing, immigration, utilities, course progression and much more. This figure doesn't include 76 learners who attended the information sessions either online or face to face at RCLC with guest speakers over the three terms as well as outreach sessions. Guest speakers are invited to the centre so that women have the opportunity to engage and access important information in a safe and private environment. The guest speakers are broadly categorised into terms which are themed on women's health, accessing local services or are linked to women's rights and safety. This year however we had to cancel all of the planned summer 2020 planned guest speakers due to Covid-19. Over autumn 2020 and spring 2021 we ran additional online information sessions.

RVA Vaccine Support Grant and Covid-19 Work

RCLC were successful in receiving the RVA Vaccine Support Grant for £1500. With this funding we:

- We supported the RBC Public health team with the recording of COVID-19 and flu vaccine messages in Urdu- this is a You Tube Video on the RBC website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vdh6aFrAfRY>
- Shaheen Kausar developed a survey in Urdu for elderly BAME groups to find out their experiences of using GP services, as a member of the South Reading Patient's Group and the RCLC Outreach Worker.
- We supported 24 ethnic minority refugee and migrant women to complete the Healthwatch questionnaire about people's experiences using health and social care services during Covid-19.
- We shared information on the Covid-19 vaccine (ingredients, safety, Q & A), information on social distancing, rules and guidance on tier 4 regulations, and information on who should be getting the vaccine and its importance. This was through our online classes and regular phone calls checks for 60 women
- HealthWatch ran a session for RCLC learners discussing the vaccine and dispelling the myths around it at the end of Feb 2021 in some of the main languages spoken by learners at the Centre
- We provided regular phone checks with our elderly Nepali, Pakistani and Indian learners- checking they have received their vaccines, giving them information and supporting them through illnesses with befriending calls. (20-30 women per month)
- We provided a weekly chat group for learners online so that they can ask questions about health and wellbeing led by Shaheen- 32 women
- We delivered an online zoom session with Nisa Unis (RBC Covid19 Communication Engagement and Outreach Officer) about Covid-19, advice and the experiences of lockdown- 18 ethnic minority women attended.
- RCLC attended the Vaccine Support Group meetings where feedback and experiences of our learners over the pandemic was shared. Information received from the meetings was disseminated to RCLC learners, staff, volunteers and the women we supported outside of the classes.
- RCLC was a surge testing site working in partnership with RBC. A total of 45 tests were administered, with staff and tutors explaining and showing the women how to take Covid-19 tests.
- RCLC completed the online survey for the Insight Survey RBC (working to understand how we can communicate key COVID-19 messages in an engaging, motivating and mobilising people living in Berkshire. We also shared the Covid-19 translated materials to learners through our class whats app groups and Facebook with our learners and shared information with our learners about the newly created Reading Families Carers Card. We supported 2 families in making this card.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (MHFA) WORK

In response to the growing need for MHFA courses in Reading during the pandemic since Mar 2020, RCLC were requested by RBC to run some MHFA First Courses online for the voluntary sector and statutory sector staff who were supporting vulnerable men and women in financial crisis over the pandemic. We were given funding from RBC to run a total of 5 courses from April 2020- March 2021 for a total of 45 men and women. We were also requested by RVA to run an additional 2 MHFA courses for volunteers and charity sector staff working during the pandemic with face-to-face roles who were working with vulnerable and isolated families. A total of 23 men and women completed these two RVA Funded MHFA Courses over Oct and Nov 2020.

We are planning to run more courses throughout 2021 and 2022. These are funded. Every course we have taught has been full, and taught online via Zoom. We are hoping that by next year we can start teaching this course face to face. However, the advantage of teaching it online has meant that RCLC were able to engage with many people across Reading, Slough, Wokingham, West Berkshire and Bracknell. Online courses may also be more accessible to those who struggle to travel due to mental health or physical needs.

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

Learner evaluations are held at the end of each term during which learners of the Centre evaluate their learning programmes and raise any issues, concerns, improvements or just highlight what they enjoyed most about their time at the Centre. When the Centre was closed due to Covid-19 these learner evaluation forms were completed by learners online and when classes resumed face-to-face they went back to their paper versions.

In autumn 2016 we started our Learner Voice Forum to engage the learners more deeply in planning and decision making about the running of the Centre. We held a series of meetings to engage learners from the classes and talk to them about what a learner forum is, how they could be involved, who would like to be a part of it and why it was important for them to be involved. A group of 12 learners formed the learners' forum group and from their discussions we were able to discuss their ideas at our strategic business plan day. It was their idea to raise money for the Centre by running pampering sessions at the Centre, selling food and other items. We implemented this by running a termly Women's Day where we raise money for the Centre by selling international food made by the learners, selling beauty treatments by the learners and tutor of the beauty class as well as a bric-a-brac sale.

Sadly, due to the pandemic and the closure of the Centre for two terms we were unable to run any of fundraising activities which had been proposed by the learners. We hope that we can run something next year, but this is dependent on government guidelines. Although we were in lockdown and unable to engage in face-to-face learner forums, we engaged in many online Covid-19 and health related discussions. The 2-day per week RCLC Outreach/ Support Worker and 1-day per week support worker also held weekly chat groups when we were in lockdown where learners could come and raise any issues or concerns that they had and get advice.

This year 2 ex-learners, who previously benefitted from the opportunities provided by the Centre, have joined the Board.

VOLUNTEERS

Some learners have chosen to undertake additional voluntary activities at the Centre. As a small organisation with only a small number of part-time paid staff, volunteering is central to the success of our work. For the volunteers, being able to contribute to the community provides satisfaction and enables them to develop and practise skills they may not otherwise be able to use. For some volunteers it has also provided a basis from which to move into paid employment.

At the start of this academic year, we had 19 volunteers:

- 4 in the reception/administrative roles (learner volunteers)
- 15 classroom volunteers (4 of these 15 were ex-learner volunteers and the remaining 8 were Reading University students and ex-teachers)

Our classroom volunteers are mainly qualified teachers. However, due to the pandemic, we could not have any volunteers in the Centre. Two of our classroom volunteers were able to volunteer in our online classes but many of the classroom volunteers were vulnerable and were shielding so could not come back when the centre reopened in Sep 2020. Moreover, due to social distancing rules and the small number of learners who we could have in the classroom we could not add a classroom volunteer into the classroom, as it meant taking up the

space of a learner. The office volunteers also could not volunteer as the office has no window and does not have enough space for another person.

Another initiative of our learner forum is to nurture learners to become board members. We have also been pleased to gain the support of three new trustees who have joined the board, Simran Aul an ex-RCLC learner and a yoga teacher, Hemamalini Sundhararajan, also an ex-RCLC learner currently supporting Shaheen with outreach and Shahanaz Uddin, a Healthwatch Officer.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

To achieve our strategic objective that focuses on removing barriers to learning, we offer excellent learner support and crèche facilities.

Learner Support

The Centre provides hands-on support, advice and encouragement, as many of the people we work with face difficulties that go well beyond their learning needs. Several of our learners have been through very traumatic experiences due to war or becoming refugees or are isolated from their families. The Centre is often seen as a first port of call for help by learners and others with a wide variety of problems and difficulties including accessing benefits, experiencing domestic violence, and dealing with immigration issues. Dealing with a complex society like ours is daunting for women with few language skills and little experience outside the home, or for those who have been traumatised by their current situation or recent history. For many women a simple referral to another agency is not enough.

This year our informal drop-in sessions have been face to face, online, and through telephone calls. So, although the centre was closed for two terms and we were working from home, our IAG and outreach services did not stop. RCLC continued supporting women with accessing local services and getting expert help when they needed it, e.g., by making appointments, acting as a link between the user and the service, explaining what letters or forms are about, befriending telephone calls, translating and giving vital health information in regard to the pandemic, and sometimes acting as an advocate for a vulnerable user. Our evaluation shows that the Centre's work breaks down isolation of the women and their families and helps them link into the wider community. In addition, there is evidence from the literature on global maternal literacy that shows that mothers who can speak, read and write in the language of the country they live in have healthier children who are more able to thrive in education themselves. Around a third of our learners require additional support.

Building on the Centre's current support work with around 34 per month vulnerable ethnic minority learners and others referred during Covid19, RCLC applied and successfully received grant funding from Berkshire West CCG to employ an ex-member of staff for 1 day pw to offer a listening ear and active signposting and referral service to those who with less extreme mental health issues, especially those requiring weekly support calls. This released the current outreach and support worker to further develop work with people, mainly women, with more extreme examples of stress, depression, and mental ill health from Jan 2020- Mar 2020. The role involved both telephone calls and distanced meetings outside. By adding a new member of staff to the team we were able to engage with 109 more women over the 3-month duration of the grant. The phone support for our elderly clients consisted of:

- Information, advice and guidance on Covid, vaccines, government guidelines on the pandemic, how to do lateral flow tests and where to get them, identifying and supporting women to get vaccinations and encouraging them to take part in online group chats about COVID-19;
- Providing Information about services (such as online food orders, getting medicine delivered to their home) not available in their first language;

- Providing information to help dispel myths about vaccines, COVID-19 and access to accurate and trusted health information in their first language;
- Translation support- form filling, translating utility bills and referrals to CommuniCare for benefit information support and translation support for refugees based at the local hotel with RRSg;
- Referrals to RVA social prescribers; and
- Providing mental health support over the phone by our trained mental health first aider and referring learners onto Talking Therapies, Adult Social Care and the Intercultural Psychological Clinic.

A total of 1,030 women were supported with information, advice and guidance (IAG) with support varying from benefit support, filling in forms, making telephone calls, translation support to accompanying them to access services at the Centre from April 2020- Mar 2021. Out of these women 32% of these were not RCLC learners and had been referred to us from friends, neighbours or other organisations. More recently we are also seeing an increase in the number of referrals from RVA Social prescribing.

Crèche

Alongside its other activities, the Centre provides a crèche which offered important support for children under 5 years old. Sadly, this year the creche had to be closed from March 2020 and the staff were furloughed for the summer term in 2020 as the country went into lockdown. The creche remained closed until the summer of 2021 when government guidelines allowed us to reopen the centre. Unlike our classes this was something that could not be run online which meant that many women who needed to engage in learning could not do so as they did not have access to the creche, schools were closed, and they were just too busy caring and home-schooling. However, once the centre reopened in the autumn term in 2020, the creche staff were employed as teaching assistants for the face-to-face classes in the sewing beginners and improvers courses and English conversation class.

The children too missed out on creche support. Many of these children have had little social contact outside their family and almost all have no English language when they arrive. Some are unfamiliar with toys or have no experience of playing with other children. Others are living in, or have already lived through, extremely difficult circumstances.

Through the crèche, children learn to speak English, to be confident separated from their mothers, and to take part in educational play which stimulates social, emotional, physical and intellectual development, in the care of a multicultural team of well-trained, loving workers. The crèche also helps to develop language skills and the ability to socialise and provides informal parenting advice and support. This provides crucial school readiness skills.

We currently employ two crèche workers and a crèche supervisor. Thankfully the creche reopened in April 2021 and has remained open since then.

MAINTENANCE OF THE CENTRE

The Centre continues to be a comfortable and well-maintained environment for learners to attend. We have ensured that our IT equipment and software is kept up-to-date and we maintain robust security software. Considerable funds have been spent on maintaining security, fire equipment and alarms, safety lighting, electrical testing and gas heating maintenance in the building.

As a result of the lockdown measures from Mar 2020, a new Covid-19 risk register had to be made in March 2020. The closure also required the following measures to be taken:

- Centre Manager to notify the building insurers and landlord of changes to the use of the building and ascertain that the building would be adequately insured whilst it was closed.
- All waste and fire hazards from outside the building to be cleared. Although the centre was closed the Centre Manager had to check on the building once a week and make sure it was cleaned regularly and still safe.
- Local council bins to be removed from the RCLC car park and left outside the car park gates to be emptied and car park gates to be locked.
- All stakeholders, funders, volunteers staff and learners were to be notified through emails, social media, partner newsletters, RCLC website and the Reading Services Guide of the closure and the new online working methods from home for all RCLC Staff.
- Centre Manager to regularly update Facebook and the RCLC Website with info relevant to Covid-19 and support that people can access in Reading with particular reference to translated support for ethnic minority women.

Although the Centre was closed the building still had to be maintained with the annual checks regarding fire alarms, PAT testing, emergency lighting, electrics, fire extinguishers, cleaning, heating, computer equipment etc. We are very grateful to RBC for their Covid-19 grant funding which allowed us to re-open the Centre for safe usage by vulnerable ethnic minority female learners in September 2020, by providing a safe environment according to the RCLC Covid-19 Risk register and government guidelines. The funding aided RCLC in purchasing a professional deep clean of the building, hand sanitiser dispensers and refills in every room, removal of hand dryers and 8 new paper hand towel and soap dispensers with soap, new bins, office screens for staff when meeting people, disposable gloves, antibacterial cleaning products, extra cleaning hours, disposable masks and aprons and new Covid-19 signage and distancing tape.

Due to the increased cleaning costs which incurred when RCLC was open we successfully applied and received an Earley Charity Covid-19 Support Grant to help pay for the extra cleaning costs.

In December 2020 a new boiler was finally installed at RCLC by the landlord. The previous boiler was very old and could no longer be repaired and had to be replaced.

STAFFING

During 2020/21 we continued to employ a part-time Centre Manager who has worked tirelessly to manage the team and, with the Trustees, promote and develop the work of the Centre. In addition, we continue to employ a part-time Programme Development/Outreach Support Worker, whose work has been invaluable in building relationships with other organisations, spreading the word about our service, recruiting new learners and supporting women on the phone, and running the community-based learning programme. Due to new grant funding we were also able to employ an additional 1-day per week outreach worker from Jan 2021 onwards to support our current outreach worker. We currently employ 6 sessional tutors: a sewing tutor (for the sewing beginners and improvers classes), one beauty tutor for Looking Good Feeling Good, one English conversation tutor, one IT Tutor, one reading and writing tutor and a tutor for our employability programme. We also employ a part-time data administrator who records, inputs and analyses our learner data.

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Centre continues to collect evidence of its outputs and outcomes through:

- Enrolment forms and attendance records of people attending. These forms record the diversity of people participating in learning opportunities, retention and achievement. We also record data onto an educational management information system database.
- Tracking of progression into further learning, volunteering and work.
- Evidence of outcomes and progression through feedback forms, records of course reviews, regular 1:1 interviews completed by all of the staff, students and trustees using volunteers as interpreters as required.
- Case studies and individual learning records and diaries of individual learning journeys and evidencing the impact of engagement in informal learning.
- For the children in the crèche: enrolment forms and attendance records, termly reviews, feedback from parents and individual learning journeys for the children.

Learner Statistics

196 learners enrolled on our core programme of courses at RCLC 2020/2021

- 90% of our core programme learners have no UK qualifications or are at an entry level in ESOL
- In total 8% of our learners have qualifications at level 1-level 3 (UK)
- 38% of learners have a degree or higher from their home country
- 90% of our learners are unemployed
- 15% of our learners are on benefits
- 5% of our learners are retired
- 10% of our learner's work part-time or full-time
- 7% of our learners use the crèche, a lifeline for those who cannot afford childcare costs (this is half of the usage compared to last year as the creche was closed)
- 42% of our learners are aged 31-40; 31% are aged 41-50; 13% are aged 19-30; 14% are 51 plus.
- 5% of our learners are refugees and 12% are asylum seekers (this is a huge increase as last year this figure was only 1%), whilst 39% of the learners have been in the UK for more than 3 years. Last year 60% of the learners had been here for more than 3 years. Demographically we have seen a huge increase in the number of new migrants and refugees in this academic year- more so than in any other year.
- 12% of learners disclosed that they needed additional support. Of this 12%, 56% of the women with additional needs are women with mental health difficulties. In comparison, last year this figure was lower and accounted for 30% showing the steep increase in the number of women disclosing mental health issues.
- 6% of the learners progressed into full-time or part-time employment. This figure is 8% lower than last year but was primarily due to the difficulty faced by many people wanting to progress into volunteering or

employment for the first time when large sectors of the economy were badly affected by the pandemic and the lockdown (people were furloughed, made redundant or left without any employment).

- 85% of our learners progressed onto internal courses, an increase of 11% from last year.
- 2% of our learners progressed onto accredited courses with the WEA or New Directions (this is a decline from 9% last year) whilst 6% progressed onto other courses in the community.
- This year learners came from an amazing 35 different countries with the majority from the following;

Libya (22%), Pakistan (19%), Turkey (8%), Syria (5%), Iran (4%), Sri Lanka (4%), Afghanistan (4%), India (3%), Algeria (3%), Hong Kong (3%), Eritrea (2%), Spain (2%), Brazil (1%), China (1%), Kuwait (1%), Poland (1%), Zimbabwe (1%), Greece (1%), Chili (1%), Mauritius (1%). Morocco (1%), Ukraine (1%). The remaining 11% came from Ecuador, Egypt, France, Ghana, Nepal, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudia Arabic, St Vincent, Tunisia and the UK.
- Current learners speak 25 different languages and are from 35 countries all over the world. 35% of the learners on the courses this year spoke Arabic as their first language compared to 21% last year. Roughly 18% of the learners speak Urdu, 8% speak Turkish, 4% speak Tamil, 4% speak Chinese, 4% speak Persian, 4% speak Spanish, 3% speak Hindi, 3% speak Pushto, 2% speak Amharic, 2% speak Portuguese, 2% speak Farsi, 2% speak Creole, 2% speak Greek, 2% speak Polish and 2% speak Shona. The remaining 3% speak English, Nepali, Fante, French, Romanian and Russian.
- Our learners are from Abbey (29%), Katesgrove (8%), Battle (7%), Whitley (7%), Minster (7%), Church (6%), Swallowfield (6%), Thames (6%), Southcote (6%), Earley (3%), Tilehurst (3%), Park (2%), Coronation (2%), Slough (2%), Hawkened (1%), Redlands (1%), Shinfield North (1%), Norcot (1%), Winnersh (1%) and Windsor (1%).

During the height of the pandemic we had waiting lists of 20 learners per course as we were unable to run classes at the Centre over summer.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Following initial interviews to identify learning needs, the Centre records achievement, recruitment and retention to check that quality learning is taking place, and that it has met the learners' needs. Progression opportunities are discussed termly by tutors and information advice and guidance advisors.

As part of the quality assurance procedures, regular teaching observations are undertaken which monitor methods of delivery, assessment, management of diversity, and equal opportunities, e-learning contributions and learners' comments. All tutors and crèche staff are qualified and supervised. Observations for the academic year 2019/ 2020 were undertaken in January and February 2020 by the Centre Manger and a New Directions Quality Assurance Manager.

In addition to the observations undertaken by the Centre Manager, New Directions has observed a selection of the tutors. Each tutor also completes a course evaluation after every session.

Approximately 10% of learners are interviewed yearly by staff, students and Trustees. Unfortunately, this year, due to the Covid-19 lockdown, our planned learner interviews could not take place, though there were class feedback sessions.

Learner Feedback and Outcomes – the difference our work makes

Interviews with learners over six years have identified that:

- the learners particularly value learning new skills, gaining confidence and the chance of progression;
- the staff are seen as very welcoming, encouraging, kind and friendly and give practical and emotional support;
- learners like the Centre's family atmosphere, friendliness and safety;
- learners make friends and enjoy themselves;
- the teachers and staff are seen as friendly, supportive and helpful; and
- the learners are mutually supportive.

Through regularly analysing our learner data and undertaking learner interviews we have identified the following key outcomes from our work. Information we have collected is given under the following two headings.

Learner Progression

- An incredible 96% of all our learners progressed on to either internal courses, jobs, volunteering or external courses both accredited and non-accredited in the academic year 2020/2021. This figure highlights the importance of the Centre as an important steppingstone in the journey for our learners to be able to aspire and grow their skills, confidence and become active participants of the community in which they live.
- 7% of the learners progressed into employment or volunteering, this figure is half the 14% from last year. This low figure was primarily due to the pandemic and 2 lockdowns with many people in the country furloughed or made redundant. Jobs were scarce over this period which made it increasingly difficult for our learners who wanted to progress into volunteering or employment for the first time especially when large sectors of the economy were badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Learner Evaluation

- Almost 100% of learners taking English classes report that they are now more confident in speaking English in everyday situations, though some note that they still lack full confidence and some still struggle with understanding English.
- 97% of learners from the English classes reported that they are now more confident and independent. They can venture out where they wouldn't have gone before with their new confidence and independence. This allows them to be more resilient, active and empowered members of their community, and better prepared for living and working in the UK. e.g. talk to neighbours, make phone calls, go shopping, get on a bus, visit the doctor or hospital, visit their children's school on their own, read their children stories.
- 97% of learners reported feeling happier, less isolated, with reduced stress and depression, improved mental health and feeling more supported. This was particularly true for single parents, those who had no family in the UK, and those who had experienced traumatic situations.
- 92% of learners reported making new friends with women from different backgrounds, thus feeling less isolated and lonely and more connected by building stronger social networks.
- Many learners identified that having access to free classes and the crèche were particularly important for them as they were on benefits or low incomes. Others are paying for courses elsewhere or would be willing to pay for extra classes at RCLC.

This feedback is broadly consistent with earlier years.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As always, we keep a tight control over expenditure and as a result we are pleased to report a net income in the region of £57,000 for 2020/21. This is an increase from 2019/20 when our net income was around £24,000.

The increase in net income is due to both increased income and decreased expenditure during financial year 2020/21. We were very grateful to receive some additional restricted funding to help us through the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which amounted to almost £16,000. We also received a full year's worth of restricted funding from Henry Smith during 2020/21 (£31,667), when in 2019/20 we received eight months' worth of funding (£20,800). In addition to these restricted funds, we received unrestricted money into the General Fund during the year. This includes unrestricted funding from Garfield Weston and AB Charitable trust, plus rent from SmartWorks.

Our costs decreased overall during 2020/21 compared with 2019/20 as the Centre was forced to close due to the pandemic. While we ran as many classes as we could online, it was not always possible to do this for all courses, so our programme costs are around £19,000 lower in 2020/21 (£28,000) compared with 2019/20 (£47,000). This is offset slightly by increased building costs, which reflect the increase in cleaning and other costs incurred to keep the Centre safe when it was possible to be open. Staffing costs have also increased year-on-year, which is partly due to the fact that we have taken on an additional outreach worker.

Income and expenditure figures are monitored monthly against the annual budget and reviewed by the Board at each meeting. We continue to produce detailed cash flow forecasts every month, as we are aware that our financial position remains fragile, particularly given the uncertainty we are all now facing due to the continuing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. When contracts are due for review, every effort is made to ensure services are purchased from the most cost-effective source.

Reading Borough Council

The basis of Reading Community Learning Centre's grant from Reading Borough Council (RBC) was changed during 2018/19. Funding from RBC consists of two strands of commissioned work under employment and adult social care themes. This money has continued to provide a valuable base, as it makes a substantial contribution towards core costs. However, indications are that we may suffer further cuts to funds provided by RBC, although we will make every effort to protect this income stream.

New Directions

We have maintained our partnership work with New Directions and continue to receive Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) funding from them. Our core programme of first steps courses is part funded by New Directions for those learners who meet the enrolment eligibility criteria and complete the course.

Other Income

Other income has come from the use of the top floor of our London Street premises by SmartWorks. They contributed a third of our rent, buildings insurance and utility costs and paid the rates on the top floor. This relationship continued until October 2021, when SmartWorks moved into new premises. We will therefore see a drop in this income in the next financial year, 2021/22.

In previous years, including 2019/20, WEA used facilities at the Centre to provide a complementary programme of ESOL progression and other introductory courses. We received no such income during 2020/21 while the Centre was open, as we needed all available space in order to allow social distancing. However, we are expecting to see some income from WEA's use of the Centre's facilities again from September 2021.

Some of our other sources of income received during 2020/21 have been given below:

- DCLG Controlling Migration funding has been provided for activities in support of the Centre's language work. We have a significant amount of this funding left as at 31 March 2021 (around £58,000) and we have agreed with DCLG that these funds can become unrestricted (effective August 2020). These will be put towards Centre running costs over the next few years.
- The Henry Smith Charity has provided funding towards certain salaries, rent and other building costs.
- Garfield Weston Foundation and AB Charitable Trust have contributed towards our core costs.
- Tampon Tax and Big Lottery have provided funds for salaries.
- The Co-Op Community Fund has provided funding for computers, sewing machines and other equipment for the Centre.

As in previous years, other funding applications were made but were unsuccessful.

We continue to charge learners a small fee for each course and for the use of places in the crèche (when we are able to have the crèche open). Other fundraising events are held throughout the year.

Reserves Policy

The Board has examined the Charity Commission's requirements for reserves in the light of the main risks to the organisation. Originally, the Board had established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible assets would be held to cover 3 months' running costs, which with the current rent and salary levels now requires an amount of £53,000 to be held. With our continued profits, we have been able to reach this level in the General Reserve.

Funds are also being held in designated reserves as follows:

- One has been set up for the designated purpose of staff costs (£42,000).
- A premises reserve (£33,000) has also been set up to cover redecoration costs under our lease, plus other premises costs for 2020/21 that are not covered by restricted funds.
- A reserve has been created to show the deposit paid by SmartWorks on their rental of part of the premises (£1,578).
- Finally, since the DCLG funding has moved to unrestricted funds as of August 2020, the Board has decided to spread this funding over the next three years rather than spend it all in 2021/22. A reserve of £48,000 has been set up to reflect the portion of these funds we are planning to spend in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Having this funding set aside allows for the fact that sources of future funding are uncertain.

Our designated reserves have increased quite significantly over the last year, due to the Centre's significantly increased proportion of unrestricted funding. In previous years, restricted funds covered a much higher proportion of expected costs for the following year, meaning that we did not require the same levels of designated reserves.

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2020
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the Board of Trustees, as the company directors on, 15/11/2021 and signed on the Board's behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Reading Community Learning Centre

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st March 2021

**Charity no
(if any)**

1123017

Set out on pages

1-2

**Respective responsibilities
of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:


Date: 27rd August 2021

Name: Rachel Eden

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body (if
any):

ACMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants)

Address:

Holy Brook Associates, Curious Lounge, 1st Floor, Pinnacle Building,

Tudor Road, Reading, England,

RG1 1NH

Section B**Disclosure**

NONE

Unaudited Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2021
for
Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd

Statement of Financial Activities
(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2021 Total Funds £	2020 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM					
Charitable activities	2				
Grants – Core programme		30,000	117,147	147,147	115,120
Grants – Community education		-	-	-	9,915
Grants – Covid-19 costs		1,318	14,678	15,996	-
Courses		5,056	8,585	13,641	9,215
Crèche		-	-	-	10,735
Total charitable activities		36,374	140,410	176,784	144,985
Donations and legacies		3,653	-	3,653	6,770
Other income	3	19,440	-	19,440	29,118
Total income		59,467	140,410	199,877	180,873
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Building costs		22,189	37,373	59,562	56,791
Office costs		1,850	400	2,250	2,412
Programme costs		4,342	23,311	27,653	46,856
Staffing		2,929	50,328	53,257	49,634
Independent examination		373	-	373	1,183
Total expenditure		31,683	111,412	143,096	156,876
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		27,784	28,998	56,782	23,997
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		104,994	87,743	192,738	168,741
Movements between restricted and unrestricted funds	7	63,197	(63,197)	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		195,975	53,544	249,519	192,738

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2021

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2021 Total Funds £	2020 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	8	2,777	-	2,777	2,861
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	4,114	8,728	12,842	11,842
Cash at bank		190,341	58,950	249,291	208,851
Total current assets		194,455	67,678	262,133	220,693
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	10	(1,258)	(14,133)	(15,392)	(30,817)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		193,197	53,545	246,742	189,877
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		195,974	53,545	249,519	192,738
NET ASSETS		195,974	53,545	249,519	192,738
FUNDS	12				
Unrestricted funds				195,976	104,994
Restricted funds				53,545	87,744
TOTAL FUNDS				249,521	192,738

Balance Sheet
at 31 March 2021 – continued

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2021.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- a) Ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Section 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- b) Preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 15 November 2021 and were signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sarah del Tufo'.

K. Sarah del Tufo (Chair of the Board of Trustees)

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP FRS 102 (second edition) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

The charity has taken advantage of the disclosure exemptions applicable to smaller charities.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Going Concern

The board of trustees considers that the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate because there are no material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life. In the year of acquisition, depreciation is recorded based on the number of months the asset is in service.

Improvements to property	Straight line over 1 year
Furniture, fixtures & fittings	25% on reducing balance
Computer equipment	33% on cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the board of trustees. Designated funds are unrestricted funds which have been allocated by the Board for particular purposes.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes.

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

2. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Activity	2021 £	2020 £
Grants	Core programme	147,147	115,120
Crèche provision	Crèche	-	10,735
Grants	Community education	-	9,915
Registration fees	Courses	2,156	6,175
MHFA courses	Courses	11,485	3,040
Grants	Covid-19 costs	15,996	-
		176,784	144,985

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	2021 £	2020 £
Reading Borough Council	36,750	30,625
Reading Borough Council - Covid-19	2,678	-
Furlough payments	1,318	-
New Directions (NLDC)	8,000	3,750
DCLG	38,340	38,340
Tampon Tax	-	9,605
Henry Smith	31,667	20,800
Garfield Weston	15,000	10,000
Awards4All	-	9,915
The Cumber Family Trust	-	1,000
The Alchemy Foundation	-	1,000
Big Lottery Covid-19 grant	10,000	-
AB Charitable Trust	15,000	-
Earley Charity	2,000	-
BWCCG and RVA grant	2,390	-
	163,143	125,035

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

3. OTHER INCOME

	2021	2020
	£	£
Rent receivable	19,440	19,206
Room and facilities hire	-	9,367
Miscellaneous other income	-	545
	<u>19,440</u>	<u>29,118</u>

4. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income /(expenditure) is slated after charging /(crediting):

	2021	2020
	£	£
Depreciation – owned assets	1,114	1,033
Other operating leases	720	720
Accounts and independent examination	373	1,183
	<u>2,207</u>	<u>2,936</u>

5. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

During the year to 31 March 2021 two of the trustees were paid for work they did outside of their trustee duties.

Hemamalini Sundharajan was paid a total of £1,199 for her role as an outreach support worker from January 2021. A laptop worth £400 was provided for conducting this work, although this is property of the Centre and will be returned. These costs were funded by the BWCCG and RVA grant.

Simran Aul received £308 for teaching online seated exercises classes between November 2020 and February 2021. These costs were funded by Reading Borough Council Lot 12.1 "Outreach & Community Education".

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Trustees' expenses

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 31 March 2021 nor for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

6. STAFF COSTS

	2021	2020
	£	£
Wages and salaries	81,404	85,556
Social security costs	37	508
Other pension costs	2,367	2,033
	83,808	88,097

The average number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2021	2020
Crèche	3	3
Tutor	6	6
Outreach and Support Worker	1	1
Manager	1	1
Administrator	1	1
Learner Data Administrator	-	1
	12	13

No member of staff was paid more than £60,000 in the year.

Key management personnel

The charity considers its key management personnel to comprise the trustees and Aisha Malik, the office manager.

7. FUNDING FROM DCLG CONTROLLING MIGRATION

During the year the charity received a grant of £38,340 from DCLG Controlling Migration and had carried forward grant from 2019/20. Some of the grant has been used towards the running costs of the Centre during 2020/21, but there is still a significant amount remaining. It was confirmed with DCLG in August 2020 that the remaining grant can be transferred to unrestricted funds. These funds will continue to be used towards the running costs of the Centre.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Improvements to property £	Furniture, fixtures & fittings £	Computer & other equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2020	9,224	4,264	18,582	32,070
Additions	-	-	1,030	1,030
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2021	9,224	4,264	19,612	33,100
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2020	9,224	3,136	16,849	29,209
Disposals	-	-	-	-
Charge for year	-	282	832	1,114
At 31 March 2021	9,224	3,418	17,681	30,323
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2021	-	846	1,931	2,777
At 31 March 2020	-	1,128	1,733	2,861

9. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2021 £	2020 £
Trade debtors	1,104	2,842
Accrued income	1,958	-
Prepayments	9,780	9,000
	12,842	11,842

10. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE TO WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2021 £	2020 £
Social security and social taxes	-	1,228
Other creditors	-	8,140
Deferred Income	14,133	19,425
Accrued expenses	1,258	2,024
	15,392	30,817

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

11. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2021	2020
	£	£
Within one year	36,000	36,000
Between one and five years	36,000	72,000
	<u>72,000</u>	<u>108,000</u>

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 01/04/2020	Net movement in funds	Transfer between funds	At 31/03/2021
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Fund	5,417	27,784	(14,803)	18,398
General Reserve	50,000	-	3,000	53,000
Designated Reserve (Smartworks)	1,578	-	-	1,578
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	28,000	-	14,000	42,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	20,000	-	13,000	33,000
Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)	-	-	48,000	48,000
	<u>104,995</u>	<u>27,784</u>	<u>63,197</u>	<u>195,976</u>
Restricted funds				
Co-Operative Group	3,401	(82)	(3,319)	-
DCLG Controlling Migration	45,252	17,249	(62,501)	-
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	(962)	6,300	-	5,338
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	5,738	5,786	-	11,524
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	22,531	4,204	-	26,735
Reading Borough Council – Covid-19	-	184	(184)	-
Inner Wheel	3,461	(894)	-	2,567
Tampon Tax	9,604	(9,511)	(93)	-
Henry Smith	(3,731)	1,200	-	(2,531)
Awards4All	2,450	-	-	2,450
Big Lottery Covid-19 grant	-	-	-	-
Earley Charity	-	-	-	-
BWCCG and RVA grant	-	871	-	871
MHFA courses	-	3,692	2,900	6,592
	<u>87,744</u>	<u>28,998</u>	<u>(63,197)</u>	<u>53,545</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>192,739</u>	<u>56,782</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>249,521</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

The movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General Fund	56,567	(31,683)	24,884
Restricted funds			
Co-Operative Group	-	(82)	(82)
DCLG Controlling Migration	38,340	(21,091)	17,249
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	8,000	(1,700)	6,300
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	23,500	(17,714)	5,786
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	13,250	(9,046)	4,204
Reading Borough Council – Covid-19	2,678	(2,494)	184
Inner Wheel	-	(894)	(894)
Tampon Tax	-	(9,511)	(9,511)
Henry Smith	31,667	(30,467)	1,200
Awards4All	-	-	-
Big Lottery Covid-19 grant	10,000	(10,000)	-
Earley Charity	2,000	(2,000)	-
BWCCG and RVA grant	2,390	(1,519)	871
MHFA courses	8,585	(4,894)	3,692
	140,410	(111,412)	28,998
TOTAL FUNDS	196,977	(143,096)	53,882

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued**2019/20 Comparatives for movement in funds**

	At 01/04/2019	Net movement in funds	Transfers between funds	At 31/03/2020
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted Funds				
General Fund	801	43,898	(39,283)	5,417
General Reserve	45,000	-	5,000	50,000
Designated Reserve (Smartworks)	-	-	1,578	1,578
Designated Reserve (Staffing)	14,000	-	14,000	28,000
Designated Reserve (Premises)	-	-	20,000	20,000
	59,801	43,898	1,295	104,994
Restricted Funds				
Co-Operative Group	3,978	(577)	-	3,401
DCLG Controlling Migration	68,244	(22,992)	-	45,252
Comic Relief	1,295	-	(1,295)	-
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	1,169	(2,131)	-	(962)
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	5,974	(236)	-	5,738
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	16,383	6,148	-	22,531
Inner Wheel	7,000	(3,539)	-	3,461
Tampon Tax	2,434	7,170	-	9,604
MarsGoodnessKnows	2,463	(2,463)	-	-
Henry Smith	-	(3,731)	-	(3,731)
Awards4All	-	2,450	-	2,450
	108,940	(19,901)	(1,295)	87,744
TOTAL FUNDS	168,741	23,997	-	192,738

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued

2019/20 Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted Funds			
General Fund	67,838	(23,940)	43,898
Restricted Funds			
Co-Operative Group	-	(577)	(577)
DCLG Controlling Migration	38,340	(61,332)	(22,992)
Comic Relief	3,750	(5,881)	(2,131)
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	19,583	(19,820)	(236)
RBC – Narrowing the Gap (Lot 1.3)	11,042	(4,893)	6,149
RBC – Outreach & Community Education (Lot 12.1)	-	(3,539)	(3,539)
Inner Wheel	9,605	(2,435)	7,170
Tampon Tax	-	(2,463)	(2,463)
MarsGoodnessKnows	20,800	(24,531)	(3,731)
Henry Smith	9,915	(7,465)	2,450
Awards4All	-	(577)	(577)
	113,035	(132,936)	(19,900)
TOTAL FUNDS	180,873	(156,876)	23,997

General Reserve

The Board has set aside £53,000 in order to cover three months' working capital requirements and three months' rent payment. This is in line with the Centre's reserving policy.

Designated Reserve (Staffing)

An amount of £42,000 has been set aside from the General Reserve to cover around six months' worth of staffing costs. This reserve has increased from £28,000 at 31 March 2020 due to the decrease in restricted funding that covers staffing costs.

Designated Reserve (Premises)

An amount of £33,000 has been put aside to cover redecoration of the premises in line with the terms and conditions of the lease and other general premises costs for 2021/2022 that are not covered by restricted funds. Again, this reserve has increased over the last year as the reduction in restricted funds means more costs in the coming year will need to be met from unrestricted funds.

Designated Reserve (SmartWorks)

A designated reserve of £1,578 has been created, which represents the deposit paid by SmartWorks Reading on their rental of part of the premises.

Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 – continued

12. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS – continued**Designated Reserve (DCLG 2022-24)**

Since the DCLG funding has moved to unrestricted funds as of August 2020 (see Note 7), the Board has decided to spread this funding over the next three years rather than spend it all in 2021/22. This allows for the fact that sources of future funding are uncertain. The £48,000 in this reserve is to be split 50/50 over financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24, to contribute towards the Centre's future running costs.

Henry Smith

There is a small deficit of £2,531 shown in the Henry Smith restricted fund at 31 March 2021. This relates to a slight mismatch in the pro-rated income received from Henry Smith and the pattern of expenditure from these restricted funds towards the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

A sum of £15,950 was received in late January 2021, which covers 1 February to 31 July 2021. This income has been pro-rated in the financial statements since only part of it relates to the 2021/22 financial year. However, slightly more than the pro-rated grant was spent in February and March 2021 on costs relating to the year ended 31 March 2021.

The deficit shown will be cleared during the year ended 31 March 2022 when the deferred income is unwound and further instalments of this income are received. Income and expenditure relating to all sources of funding are monitored carefully by the Centre Manager and Treasurer to ensure that no permanent deficits emerge.

13. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There are no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2021.