

READING SAMARITANS
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1 APRIL 2023 TO 31 MARCH 2024

Charity Registration Number: 1170632

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INTRODUCTION

Reading Samaritans is a charity based in Reading serving both the local area and wider community. It is a recognised branch of the national Samaritans Charity and, as one of around 200 branches, provides emotional support across the country.

The Reading Samaritans' trustees present their annual report and financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

SAMARITANS VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Samaritans' vision is that fewer people die by suicide. We work to achieve this vision by making it our mission to alleviate emotional distress and reduce the incidence of suicidal feelings and suicidal behaviour.

We are committed to the following values:

- Listening;
- Confidentiality;
- People making their own decision;
- Being non-judgemental; and
- Human contact.

CHARITY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of Reading Samaritans are:

- I) To enable persons in Reading and the surrounding area as well as elsewhere who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those who may be at risk of suicide, to receive confidential emotional support at any time of the day or night in order to improve their emotional health and to reduce the incidence of suicide;
- II) To promote a better understanding in society of suicide, suicidal behaviour and the value of expressing feelings which may otherwise lead to suicide or impaired emotional health; and
- III) To collaborate with and support Samaritans Central Charity and its affiliated branches in fulfilling these objectives.

CHARITY ACTIVITIES

The charity offers support to those who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those who may be at risk of suicide by being there to listen and encourage the recognition and exploration of their options. By doing so we aim to help people find ways of coping with their current feelings.

Reading Samaritans Outreach provides services to schools, higher education institutions, companies and at local events. We also work locally providing regular support in Huntercombe Prison and at local railway stations. We aim to increase awareness of our services in all sectors of the community by giving awareness talks, attending local public events and working with other organisations.

These activities are carried out by Reading Samaritans for the benefit of the local and wider community and with due regard of the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

While Reading Samaritans is a longstanding organisation in Reading, it was incorporated as a separate Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 8 December 2016.

Reading Samaritans is a recognised branch of Samaritans, with the national Samaritans Charity providing support services such as training materials and guidance. This relationship is governed by an Operating Agreement which ensures all branches adhere to the same required standards, while recognising that branches have their own leadership team and are responsible for fundraising and overall governance.

Reading Samaritans activities are wholly performed by our committed group of around 120 volunteers and we have no employees. The charity is managed by the leadership team, comprised of trustees and deputy directors. The branch Director, also a trustee, is responsible for the day to day management of the charity's activities including matters arising relating to callers and volunteers. The Director is supported in their role by a team of deputy directors who have specific roles and responsibilities.

The Trustee Board oversees the charity and have collective and ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed and run. Trustees place a high priority on ensuring high standards of governance including management of risk assessment processes. Trustees are recruited from both within the charity and externally to ensure Reading Samaritans has a balanced and appropriately skilled Trustee Board. The trustee hiring process involves interviews and background checks. Following this, the Trustee Board must vote on the admission of new trustees. Members of Reading Samaritans also vote whether to re-elect each trustee at the Annual General Meeting. New trustees are provided with an initial information pack and are required to complete online training designed by the national Samaritans Charity.

Full leadership team meetings are held at least every 3 months, with separate Trustee Board and deputy director meetings held in the intervening months. Decisions are taken at meetings where trustees are present, with a simple majority of trustees required for decisions to be passed. Additional meetings are held when required and decisions can be made outside of these meetings if needed.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Support Provided

Reading Samaritans volunteers continue to provide vital support to callers. Numbers of calls are slightly higher compared to the previous year, with a continued reduction in emails reflecting changes in working practices.

- 15,457 telephone calls (14,878 in 2022/23)
- 221 emails (594 in 2022/23)

Our volunteers and Rota Secretaries continue to work hard to ensure that we cover as many shifts as possible. Reading Samaritans meets the standard set for us in our Agreement with the Samaritans Central Charity for covering hours of need shifts, when callers need us the most. Our 2023/4 performance is summarised on the table below.

Category	Time	Target	Reading Sams 2023/24
Twilight	22.00 – 02.00	20%	21.1%
Overnight	02.00 – 06.00	10%	12.8%

Key Developments

The branch was very fortunate to receive a generous £20,000 legacy from one of our former volunteers, Dorothy. We have used some of this money, along with other donations and grants to complete the work to modernise our premises and to buy new equipment, so that we have a comfortable, modern base and the facilities that we need to support our callers. We have also used the funding to pay for some modest thank you gifts for our longer standing volunteers and have set some money aside for a branch meeting and training session in the next financial year.

Volunteer numbers have remained reasonably stable throughout the year, although with some monthly fluctuations. We are continually reviewing the rota and shift coverage and we are taking active steps to improve retention such as social events, long service awards and thank you cards and training 'interest' events on topics of interest to volunteers.

Over the past six months we have particularly focussed upon supporting and retaining our volunteers during their Probationary period with us as we have found that we unfortunately are more likely to lose volunteers during this time. We have changed the way that we provide Embedding training to our Mentees and Probationers and this has proved to be a positive and popular change, providing more face to face training and support to this group of volunteers.

We again had 3 cohorts of volunteers complete the initial training programme to become a Samaritans listening volunteer and volunteer applications continue to be strong. There has also been a focus on the Keeping Data Safe in Samaritans training which was a mandated requirement from Central Office. We have also run a number of interest sessions open to all volunteers, including two very well attended sessions on domestic abuse, delivered by Berkshire Women's Aid and a session on supporting callers in prison.

Ongoing Mentoring restarted in the branch in September 2023, after a break due to the pandemic. This gives all volunteers a valuable opportunity to receive feedback from a fellow volunteer and helps us to maintain our listening skills.

Community Outreach Programme

The last year has seen a continued broadening of our outreach efforts, with established partnerships continuing and new opportunities being explored. We have kept a busy diary, including hosting talks to organisations, attending community events, supporting local schools and working with Great Western Railway and Network Rail.

We have attended events in and around Reading including Reading Pride (supporting the LGBTQ+ community), East Reading Festival, Woodley Carnival and Flackstock. All of these events have served as valuable opportunities to promote our service and increase awareness of Samaritans, as well as provide emotional support to the public if required. To get into the heart of our community, we also held a stall in Broad Street in Reading for a day in February. This proved to be incredibly worthwhile as we had many useful conversations about Samaritans, provided emotional support to several members of the public and also managed to raise £400 for the branch.

The hard work has also continued in the schools team, with many secondary schools and colleges, as well as Reading University, benefiting from visits and listening tips presentations. Staff have also been trained to support students. Our railway partnership has worked alongside staff at Reading station to deliver postvention support after deaths by suicide on the local railways. The team were hosted for a day in March to support the *Small Talk Saves Lives* campaign for both station staff and the public.

We have continued to work with the Royal Berkshire Hospital to receive email referrals from their A&E department and contact patients after presentation to the hospital. Furthermore, we have worked to develop additional relationships with other organisations. We have worked with Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) to deliver training to their employees around listening skills, self-harm and suicide. In turn, BWA held two training sessions for our volunteers to explore the topic of domestic abuse to enable us to support callers with these concerns better. We have also worked with a fan support group from Reading Football Club (Talking Royals) and have attended two of their meetings to raise awareness of Samaritans and deliver talks in line with the SHUSH listening tips and *Small Talk Saves Lives* campaign.

In order to continue to develop the capacity of our outreach offer, 15 new volunteers have recently been outreach trained, enabling them to deliver emotional support outside of the branch and looking ahead to 2024-2025 we have a full programme of events for the local community.

Branch Improvements

As part of a charity wide initiative funded by Samaritans Central Office, all of our telephony and internet services are now delivered digitally via full fibre broadband direct to the branch. The new system known as VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), including the implementation of new telephones and IT networking equipment, has resulted in improved call audio quality and more reliable call connections, meaning fewer drop outs and lost calls. Further benefits include no outgoing call charges and our on-going monthly service costs are now paid for by Samaritans Central Office.

The continued success of grant applications and a number of generous bequests during the year allowed us to complete more renovation work than we had originally budgeted for so the majority of the main building refurbishment is now complete. The most significant building improvement has been the replacement of our 40+ year old entrance door and fire exit door with more secure,

draught free and energy efficient ones. To further reduce energy costs, both of our buildings are now utilising our existing solar panel installation and all internal and external lighting across the site has been changed to low energy LED bulbs.

FUTURE PLANS

The priority of the Reading Samaritans is to ensure we have a safe and supportive environment for all volunteers, increase volunteer numbers and engage with the local community in an increased capacity.

The focus for the coming months is to improve our retention of volunteers by ensuring that our volunteers feel supported and that they are part of a community. We are planning an event to recognise our longer standing volunteers, together with a combined branch meeting and training event. We would also like to recruit and train more mentors, so that we can ensure that new volunteers get the opportunity to work with two mentors and see the range of 'styles' that we bring and also to alleviate the pressure on mentors.

A new Service Level Agreement for branches who wish to provide support to callers via Email is due to be published in May 2024 and work is underway to prepare the branch to meet the terms of the agreement so that we can continue to support callers in this way. Preparation includes encouraging volunteers to complete the digital email training topic, with email mentoring support available if required.

Upcoming plans for the branch include the Samaritans wide replacement of the LINK call system in the autumn, incorporating further enhancements to our telephony system. This will include automatically switching our broadband service to a 4G mobile signal in the event that the main cable connection to our branch is unavailable.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Results for the Period

Income from all sources amounted to £60,309 while total expenditure was £52,345, which resulted in a profit for the year of £7,964.

Financial Highlights

Reading Samaritans received some very generous bequests in the year that enabled further refurbishment of the centre meaning we are in a good position for years to come.

We also received generous support from local businesses, groups and individuals in the period. These include R Bion Ltd, and Man the Lifeboats as well as a generous donation from St Laurence Church.

We also wish to extend our gratitude to all other local businesses and groups who continue to support us. These funds are crucial in enabling us to continue with the day to day running of the charity.

Our volunteers support us not just with their time but by their amazing fundraising efforts. These include sponsored sporting events and street collections. Many volunteers also donated back monies due to them by way of travel expenses which allowed Reading Samaritans to claim a further £2.1K in Gift Aid.

Our current volunteers, previous volunteers and other members of the community participate in our monthly lottery called the 100 Club, which raised £3.2K in subscriptions in the period.

We are fortunate to be supported by Reading Borough Council who provided support to assist us with our recruitment and training. We also receive national Samaritans Charity support that allows us to continue our work with Huntercombe Prison.

With the continued reduced fundraising and awareness we have been fortunate in securing grants of £4K Postcode Lottery, £4K from GWR / SWR and £4K from the Green Hall Foundation.

Most of the expenditure in the period was incurred on centre running costs, centre facilities updates and ensuring we are properly insured for our activities. The additional grants received have also enabled us to refurbish the main building.

Reserves Policy

Reading Samaritans maintains unrestricted reserves:

- To provide a level of working capital that protects the continuity of our work;
- To provide a level of funding for unexpected opportunities; and
- To provide cover for risks such as unforeseen expenditure or unanticipated loss of income.

Reading Samaritans' Trustees are responsible for determining the appropriate level of reserves for the branch to hold. The current policy is to hold reserves equivalent to 18 months expenditure which is both the reserves level the Trustee Board determine appropriate and also the expectation of the National Samaritans Charity.

Unrestricted reserves held at 31st March 2024 were 18.1 months or £58,282 which is a exactly per policy as we managed the expenditure in line with the bequest received

Restricted funds are designated separately and are used in accordance with agreements between Reading Samaritans and the relevant fund providers such as the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and Postcode Lottery. At 31st March 2024, there was £4,773 of restricted funds.

Reserves are held in current or accessible savings accounts to ensure the branch activities can operate smoothly.

Financial Policies and Control

Reading Samaritans has a detailed financial policy framework, reviewed and approved by the external charity oversight organisation Reading Voluntary Action.

The branch accounts comply with statutory requirements and with the branch constitution.

The Trustees believe the existing controls are adequate to safeguard the assets of the charity.

Payments to Trustees

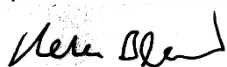
No remuneration was paid to any of the Trustees. Where appropriate, Trustees have been reimbursed for expenses incurred in performing their duties as a Listener, in their Management/Support Volunteer roles or as a Trustee. As with all expenses, these are reviewed and approved by at least 2 signatories. Under no circumstances does the Trustee claiming expenses approve their own expenses.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES

The trustees are responsible for preparing the annual report and financial statements in accordance with Charity Commission guidelines. The annual report and financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Charity Commission guidelines. These financial statements have been reviewed and approved by an independent examiner.

The trustees are responsible for keeping sufficient accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time, the financial position of the charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

By order of the Trustees



Helen Blanchard

Director and Chair of the Trustee Board [since September 2023]

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**Registered Name**

Reading Samaritans is a registered charity, with charity registration number 1170632.

Registered and Operational Address

59a Cholmeley Road
Reading, Berkshire
RG1 3NB

The Trustees**Current Trustees**

Helen Blanchard	<i>Director and Chair</i>
Ester May	<i>Vice Director</i>
Hetal Patel	<i>Secretary</i>
Elizabeth Hayes	
Justin Bedingfeld	<i>Treasurer</i>
Dave Calver	
Darren Jones	
Joanna Hayes	
Angelina Lewis	
Sophie Mcbean	
Sarah Bowsher	

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the Reading Samaritans on the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity ("the Trust") on pages 12 to 18 for the year ended 31 March 2024.

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records
- the accounts do 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 no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

 Date 11 August 2024
Christine Holland CPFA
9 Ellerton Close
Theale
Reading RG7 5QN

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

Receipts and payments

	<i>Note</i>	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
		£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Donations	2	28,314	-	28,314	4,285
Revenue Grants	3	1,223	14,706	15,929	17,092
Fundraising	4	15,482	-	15,482	15,492
Bank and Building Society Interest	5	584	-	584	172
Total receipts		45,603	14,706	60,309	37,041
Payments					
Direct and Charitable Expenditure	6	33,925	13,783	47,708	40,032
Fundraising Costs	7	2,862	-	2,862	2,542
Management and Administration	8	433	-	433	295
Contribution to Central Charity	9	1,342	-	1,342	1,128
Total payments		38,562	13,783	52,345	43,997
Net of receipts / (payments)		7,041	923	7,964	-6,956
Cash funds last year					
		58,282	3,850	62,132	69,087
Cash funds this year		65,322	4,773	70,096	62,132

Statement of assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2024

	<i>Note</i>	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
		£	£	£	£
Cash funds					
Coop Current Account		4,273	4,773	9,046	8,116
HSBC Deposit Account		4,046	0	4,046	2,547
Virgin Money Deposit Account		57,004	0	57,004	51,469
Total cash funds		65,322	4,773	70,096	62,132

NOTES TO THE RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

(1) Accounting Policies

Basis for Accounts Preparation

The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with Charity Commission guidance.

Income

All income is accounted for when received. Income is allocated by category to enable analysis of income sources at any time.

Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for when it is paid and is classified under headings that aggregate costs to a category. Expenditure includes VAT which cannot be recovered.

Expenditure is broken down into four categories:

- Direct and Charitable Expenditure
- Fundraising Costs;
- Management and Administration; and
- Contribution to Central Charity.

There are notes to the accounts showing what is included in each of these categories.

Tangible Fixed Assets

All tangible fixed assets have been expensed. However, all items that cost more than £1,000 are listed on an asset register.

Funds

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objects at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for certain activities as specified by the donor or the fundraising process. Relevant expenditure is categorised against each fund.

Details of Receipts**(2) Donations**

Donations	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
Individuals	999	-	999	601
Churches	1,000	-	1,000	1,000
Groups in the Community	369	-	369	620
Gift Aid	2,150	-	2,150	1,563
Bequests	23,068	-	23,068	-
Street Collections	727	-	727	501
Total	28,314	-	28,314	4,285

(3) Revenue Grants

Revenue Grants	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
National Offender Management Service	1,223	2,956	4,179	1,879
Reading Borough Council	-	-	-	6,013
Sykes	-	-	-	1,000
Reading Community	-	-	-	250
Earley Charity	-	-	-	3,000
Berkshire Community Foundation	-	-	-	2,800
Postcode Lottery	-	3,800	3,800	-
GWR SCC Grant	-	3,950	3,950	2,150
Grant Hall	-	4,000	4,000	-
Total	1,223	14,706	15,929	17,092

(4) Fundraising

Fundraising	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
Business and Corporate Fundraising	5,025	-	5,025	5,348
100 Club	3,211	-	3,211	3,068
Volunteer Initiated Fundraising	149	-	149	579
Witt Morgan Concerts	-	-	-	529
FIT Payments	101	-	101	650
Festival Branch Store Rental	500	-	500	500
Sarah Millican	-	-	-	2,005
Easy Fundraising, Amazon Smile etc	6,313	-	6,313	2,587
Other	183	-	183	226
Total	15,482	-	15,482	15,492

(5) Bank and Building Society Interest

Bank and Building Society Interest	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
HSBC	54	-	54	2
Virgin	530	-	530	170
Total	584	-	584	172

Details of Expenditure**(6) Direct and Charitable Expenditure**

Direct and Charitable Expenditure	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024 £	Last Year £
Fabric of the Centre	9,231	-	9,231	10,788
Maintenance Contracts	4,861	-	4,861	3,807
Utilities	5,357	-	5,357	3,989
Housekeeping	3,252	-	3,252	2,912
Equipping the Centre	6,374	-	6,374	2,114
Volunteer Expenses	258	-	258	465
Conference/Meeting Fees	-	-	-	10
Outreach	808	-	808	101
Committee Hospitality and Other Costs	164	-	164	22
Volunteer Recognition and Retention	3,619	-	3,619	2,498
Gift Aiding of Expenses	-	-	-	-
Reading Borough Council	-	3,750	3,750	2,263
NOMS (see Restricted Expenditure Note	-	1,066	1,066	1,777
Reading CIC	-	131	131	132
Postcode Lottery	-	-	-	-
Berkshire Community Foundation	-	-	-	2,800
Pears Grant	-	-	-	-
GWR SCC Grant	-	4,527	4,527	2,414
Sykes Foundation	-	310	310	690
Reading Community	-	-	-	250
Earley Charity	-	-	-	3,000
Green Hall	-	4,000	4,000	-
Total	33,925	13,783	47,708	40,032

Fundraising Costs

Fundraising Costs	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024 £	Last Year £
Raising Branch Income	742	-	742	647
100 Club	2,120	-	2,120	1,895
Gift Aiding of Expenses	-	-	-	-
Total	2,862	-	2,862	2,542

(7) Management and Administration

Management and Administration	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
Phone Calls	-	-	-	-
Travel Claims	62	-	62	-
Stationery and Postage	50	-	50	-
Hospitality	-	-	-	-
Committee Member Expenses	-	-	-	-
Professional Fees	-	-	-	26
AGM and Annual Review	321	-	321	268
Total	433	-	433	294

(8) Contribution to Central Charity

Contribution to Central Charity	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2024	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
Branch Contribution	1,342	-	1,342	1,128
Total	1,342	-	1,342	1,128

(9) Restricted Funds

Restricted Funds	1st April 2023	Income	Expenditure	31st March 2024
Reading Borough Council	3,750	-	3,750	0
National Offender Management Scheme (NOMS)	- 918	2,956	1,066	972
Sykes Foundation	310	-	310	- 0
Reading CIC Grant	131	-	131	0
Reading Community	-	-	-	-
Earley Charity	-	-	-	-
Berkshire Community Foundation	-	-	-	-
Postcode Lottery	-	3,800	-	3,800
GWR SCC Grant	577	3,950	4,527	0
Green Hall	-	4,000	4,000	-
Total	3,850	14,706	13,783	4,773

Restricted funds include the following:

- Reading Borough Council grant used for recruitment and training costs including printing, some electricity and cost of training sessions
- NOMS grant for our Huntercombe Prison support
- Sykes Donation used for external training
- Reading CIC grant for Outreach events in Reading the town centre
- GWR grant to cover Outreach events, materials and training of new volunteers
- Green Hall Foundation used to upgrade doors in our main building