

READING SAMARITANS
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1 APRIL 2024 TO 31 MARCH 2025

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 2025.

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 annually, with separate Trustee and deputy director meetings held on alternate 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.

- 16,726 telephone calls (15,457 in 2022/23)
- 276 emails (221 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 2024/25	Reading Sams 2023/24
Twilight	22.00 – 02.00	20%	17.2%	21.1%
Overnight	02.00 – 06.00	10%	14.9%	12.8%
Total hours of need	22.00 – 06.00	30%	32.1%	33.9%

Key Developments

This year we celebrated our longer standing volunteers with a lunch and presentation of long service awards in August 2024. This included our longest serving volunteer who has been a Samaritans listening volunteer for over 50 years. We also held a training day in February 2025 which was open to all volunteers and which provided 'top up' training on a range of topics selected by our volunteers, including safeguarding and supporting people who call us from prison. There has been a focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training which was a mandated requirement from Central Office.

A new Service Level Agreement for branches who wish to provide support to callers via Email was published in May 2024 and Reading Branch has successfully applied to retain our status as a branch which supports callers by email. We have appointed an Email Champion. All our Leaders on Call have now completed Email training, enabling them to provide support to volunteers who are supporting callers by email. We have also encourages our volunteers to complete the digital email training topic. The numbers above show a modest increase in the number of emails answered by the branch, and we plan to further increase this in the coming year.

The national survey of Samaritans volunteers was completed in Summer 2024, and most of the feedback from our volunteers was encouraging:

- 98% of respondents are proud to volunteer for Samaritans
- 98% of respondents have confidence in the actions and direction provided by the leadership team at Reading Samaritans
- 98% of respondents felt that they had the right level of training to fulfil their role with Samaritans

Whilst the survey feedback was very positive overall, inevitably, there are some areas that require attention. In particular, some Reading volunteers expressed a view that they would welcome more feedback on how they were doing and that they would like more communications. The Branch Leadership Team has put plans in place to address these issues.

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.

We again had 3 cohorts of volunteers complete the initial training programme to become a Samaritans listening volunteer. In common with other Samaritans branches we found that volunteer applications have reduced somewhat over the year, and it has been a challenge to fill our training spaces. We have taken the decision to trial running two, larger cohorts of initial training during the calendar year 2025 and will evaluate the impact of this change when planning our 2026 initial training programme.

We have focussed on recruiting new mentors and held our second 'mentoring open evening' in September 2024, to encourage volunteers to learn more about mentoring and to take on a mentoring role. We recruited an additional four mentors as a result of this initiative, which we will repeat in 2025/6.

Ongoing Mentoring was completed during 2024. 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 outreach team have been involved in many community events over the past year. Our work to increase awareness of our service and provide emotional support has seen us attend organised events such as Woodley Carnival, Flackstock and Reading Pride. Each of these events served a diverse demographic and we sought to promote our service by engaging with the public directly.

In addition, we worked with Reading council to secure a space in Broad Street to reach into the heart of the Reading community and be a visible presence in the centre of town. One of our volunteers has also worked specifically with the council to support the development of a mental health and suicide first aid training programme for council employees.

Beyond community events, the outreach team have delivered several SHUHS listening talks to various organisations, including a Grundon manager's day, West Berkshire Schools Mental Health Leads conference and Pierre Fabre Group. We also delivered a series of talks for Thames Valley Police as part of a month of action which ran between World Suicide Prevention Day and World Mental Health Day.

The Schools team have continued to engage with local secondary schools, sixth forms and colleges to deliver listening tips talks to students as well as training on supporting their and others' mental wellbeing. The Network Rail team have also sustained their partnership with Reading Station and others in the local area, providing postvention after incidents as well as a 12-hour presence at the main station as part of *Small Talk Saves Lives* campaign in March. Moreover, our Prisons team have sustained their work with HMP Huntercombe by delivering regular training to residents and opportunities for support.

Branch Improvements

As part of a charity wide initiative funded by Samaritans Central Office, our LINK call system has been replaced by the more resilient "Listening Centre" which is a softphone/IT based solution removing the need for physical telephones on our duty stations. Our wireless and wired headsets and handsets now plug directly into our Chromeboxes and all other phone functionality is carried out on screen using a keyboard and mouse.

With the further success of grant applications, we continued with our efforts to reduce energy costs with a substantial addition to the loft insulation in our main building as well as the introduction of a new smart thermostat which allows remote access to our boiler to turn down or switch off the heating if the building is unexpectedly unoccupied such as a cancelled shift. The volunteer comfort level has improved and the benefits of replacing our leaking and draughty ground floor entrance and fire exit doors last year was noticeable during the winter months.

More renovation work has been completed including the full refurbishment of our two large steel driveway gates which had become rusty with flaking paint from years of exposure to the elements.

As our IT and telephony systems are now fully up to date and we've implemented the more affordable recommendations for energy efficiency, we will continue our plans to refurbish the remaining untouched rooms in the main building including the kitchen, volunteer toilet and shower room, as funding becomes available.

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 year is to further improve our retention of volunteers by ensuring that our volunteers feel supported and that they are part of a community. We are going to trial the reintroduction of support groups to continue building the sense of community in the branch.

We will continue our efforts 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.

We are going to include email training as part of Embedding (the further training provided to volunteers during mentoring and probation) as part of a programme of work to encourage volunteers to support email callers. We are also introducing email mentors, to support volunteers who are new to email, ensuring that they are confident and competent to provide support to our email callers.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Results for the Period

Income from all sources amounted to £36,440 while total expenditure was £38,598, which resulted in a loss for the year of £2,158.

Financial Highlights

Reading Samaritans received some very generous support 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 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 £2.7K 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 £3.1K in subscriptions in the period.

We are fortunate to be supported by Post Code Lottery support to assist us with our recruitment and training. We also receive National Samaritans Charity support allows us to continue our work with Huntercombe Prison.

With the continued reduced fundraising and awareness we have been fortunate in securing grants of £2K from Groundworks to support our energy efficiency at our Centre.

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 2025 were 22.7 months or £67,938 so slightly above our target.

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 2025, there were £0 restricted funds as we spent according to agreements.

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

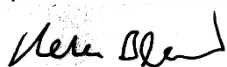
No remuneration was paid to any of the Trustees. Where appropriate, Trustees have been reimbursed for expenses incurred in performing their duties as a Listener, in their Management/Support Volunteer roles or as a Trustee. As with all expenses, these are reviewed and approved by at least 2 signatories. 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 to 9/4/2025</i>
Hetal Patel	<i>Secretary</i>
Elizabeth Hayes	
Justin Bedingfeld	<i>Treasurer</i>
Dave Calver	<i>to 10/10/2024</i>
Darren Jones	
Joanna Hayes	<i>to 10/10/2024</i>
Angelina Lewis	<i>to 10/10/2024</i>
Sophie Mcbean	
Sarah Bowsher	
Atul Khetarpal	<i>From 10/10/2024</i>



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the
accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Reading Samaritans

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31/03/25

Charity no
(if any)

1170632

Set out on pages

13 to 17

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity
("the Trust") for the year ended .

**Responsibilities and basis of
report**

As the charity's 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 all
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 (~~other than that disclosed below*~~) 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 no concerns and 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.

*Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Christine Holland

Date:

31/8/2025.

Name:

christine holland

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

CIPFA.

Address:

9 Ellerton Close, Theale
Reading
RG7 5DN.



RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

Receipts and payments

	<i>Note</i>	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025 £	Last Year £
Receipts					
Donations	2	7,571	-	7,571	28,314
Revenue Grants	3	1,323	2,599	3,922	15,929
Fundraising	4	24,045	-	24,045	15,482
Bank and Building Society Interest	5	902	-	902	584
Total receipts		33,841	2,599	36,440	60,309
Payments					
Direct and Charitable Expenditure	6	26,248	7,372	33,620	47,708
Fundraising Costs	7	2,268	-	2,268	2,862
Management and Administration	8	699	-	699	433
Contribution to Central Charity	9	2,011	-	2,011	1,342
Total payments		31,225	7,372	38,598	52,345
Net of receipts / (payments)		2,615	-4,773	-2,158	7,964
Cash funds last year					
		65,322	4,773	70,096	62,132
Cash funds this year		67,938	0	67,938	70,096

Statement of assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2025

	<i>Note</i>	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025 £	Last Year £
Cash funds					
Coop Current Account		4,718	0	4,718	9,046
HSBC Deposit Account		5,403	0	5,403	4,046
Virgin Money Deposit Account		57,817	0	57,817	57,004
Total cash funds		67,938	0	67,938	70,096

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 2025 £	Last Year £
Individuals	1,249	-	1,249	999
Churches	1,000	-	1,000	1,000
Groups in the Community	-	-	-	369
Gift Aid	2,700	-	2,700	2,150
Bequests	1,817	-	1,817	23,068
Street Collections	805	-	805	727
Total	7,571	-	7,571	28,314

(3) Revenue Grants

Revenue Grants	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025 £	Last Year £
National Offender Management Service	1,323	716	2,039	4,179
Postcode Lottery	-	-	-	3,800
GWR SCC Grant	-	-	-	3,950
Green Hall	-	-	-	4,000
Groundwork	-	1,883	1,883	-
Total	1,323	2,599	3,922	15,929

(4) Fundraising

Fundraising	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025 £	Last Year £
Business and Corporate Fundraising	11,000	-	11,000	5,025
100 Club	3,107	-	3,107	3,211
Volunteer Initiated Fundraising	2,024	-	2,024	149
Witt Morgan Concerts	-	-	-	-
FIT Payments	1,328	-	1,328	101
Festival Branch Store Rental	550	-	550	500
Sarah Millican	653	-	653	-
Easy Fundraising, Amazon Smile etc	5,309	-	5,309	6,313
Other	74	-	74	183
Total	24,045	-	24,045	15,482

(5) Bank and Building Society Interest

Bank and Building Society Interest	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
HSBC	89	-	89	54
Virgin	813	-	813	530
Total	902	-	902	584

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

Direct and Charitable Expenditure	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
Fabric of the Centre	5,265	-	5,265	9,231
Maintenance Contracts	3,848	-	3,848	4,861
Utilities	5,964	-	5,964	5,357
Housekeeping	5,180	-	5,180	3,252
Equipping the Centre	2,089	-	2,089	6,374
Volunteer Expenses	91	-	91	258
Conference/Meeting Fees	-	-	-	-
Outreach	564	-	564	808
Committee Hospitality and Other Costs	19	-	19	164
Volunteer Recognition and Retention	3,227	-	3,227	3,619
Gift Aiding of Expenses	-	-	-	-
Reading Borough Council	-	-	-	3,750
NOMS (see Restricted Expenditure Note)	-	1,690	1,690	1,066
Reading CIC	-	-	-	131
Postcode Lottery	-	3,800	3,800	-
GWR SCC Grant	-	-	-	4,527
Sykes Foundation	-	-	-	310
Green Hall	-	-	-	4,000
Groundwork	-	1,883	1,883	-
Total	26,248	7,372	33,620	47,708

Fundraising Costs

Fundraising Costs	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025	Last Year
	£	£	£	£
Raising Branch Income	403	-	403	742
100 Club	1,865	-	1,865	2,120
Gift Aiding of Expenses	-	-	-	-
Total	2,268	-	2,268	2,862

(7) Management and Administration

Management and Administration	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025 £	Last Year £
Phone Calls	132	-	132	-
Travel Claims	94	-	94	62
Stationery and Postage	-	-	-	50
Professional Fees	35	-	35	-
AGM and Annual Review	438	-	438	321
Total	699	-	699	433

(8) Contribution to Central Charity

Contribution to Central Charity	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2025 £	Last Year £
Branch Contribution	2,011	-	2,011	1,342
Total	2,011	-	2,011	1,342

(9) Restricted Funds

Restricted Funds	1 st April 2024	Income	Expenditure	31 st March 2025
Reading Borough Council	-	-	-	0
National Offender Management Scheme (NOMS)	973	716	1,690	0
Postcode Lottery	3,800	-	3,800	-
GWR SCC Grant	0	-	-	0
Groundwork	-	1,883	1,883	-
Total	4,773	2,599	7,372	0

Restricted funds include the following:

- NOMS grant for our Huntercombe Prison support
- Post Code Lottery Funding used for recruitment, training and Training Centre
- Groundwork used to improve building efficiency