



Annual Report 2025 Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC)



“a unique, socially inclusive approach to learning”

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Charity Details

Charity Name: Reading Community Learning Centre Ltd
Registered Office: 94 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ
Website: www.rclc.org.uk

Company Number: 06442616 (England and Wales)

Charity Number: 1123017

Reference and Administrative Details

Trustees (who are also the directors for the purposes of company law):

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

CEO & Company Secretary: Aisha Malik

Independent Examiner: Holy Brook Associates

Programme Coordinator/Outreach workers

Shaheen Kausar
Noreen Khan
Rohama Kanwal
Samar Al-Tamimi
Pooja Vachhani

Administrator:

Hemamalini Sundararajan

Creche Workers:

Premalatha Sudarshan
Shahla Maqsud
Farida Masud
Sumera Rashid

Sessional Tutors:

Parveen Brar
Sanzla Bhagi
Farzana Yasmin
Shagufta Fuad
Simran Aul
Donna Ma (Staff rep on the board)
Amina Rabbani

Website:

www.rclc.org.uk

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/readingcommunitylearning/>

Structure, Governance, and Management

Reading Community Learning Centre 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 Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic direction and policies of the organisation. The day-to-day management is delegated to the Centre Manager. Board meetings are held approximately every six weeks.

The charity was awarded a renewal of the Reading Voluntary Action Safe and Sound Good Governance Award in 2023, demonstrating robust governance across all key areas.

Trustees are recruited through a process involving an initial meeting with the Chair and Manager, observation of a Board meeting, and a formal invitation to join. Induction and training are provided to all new trustees.

The trustees have a risk management policy, a comprehensive CEO report and financial report is also presented at each board meeting including any safeguarding concerns.

In 2025 RCLC recruited a new Chair for the Board after Katharine Sarah Del Tufo stepped down from the post at the AGM in 2024. Katharine Sarah Del Tufo will remain as Vice Chair and support the new Chair in their new post for a year.

RCLC are pleased to welcome Fatima Habib as the new Chair of RCLC in 2025. With over 30 years of experience across the private, public, and non-profit sectors—both in South Africa and the UK—she brings a strong track record in governance, social justice, and community development

Members

Reading Community Learning Centre is a membership organisation. There are currently 65 members, mainly longstanding supporters of the work of the Centre. 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



Learner Quote: *“I feel it’s a safe space where we can share our thoughts and feelings.”*

Structure, Governance, and Management

Trustees Report

Despite many challenges, including, as with all small charities, huge fundraising issues and continuing cost of living crisis, this year has again been a real year of development for the Centre. As well as the classes and social opportunities, we are offering mental health and emotional support to our learners, and information, advice and guidance to increasing numbers of women. As always, our learners, staff, volunteers and Trustees, have been amazing, contributing not only their skills and time, but also ensuring that the Centre is a warm, welcoming family for the migrant and refugee women and their children who visit. Our partner organisations, both statutory and voluntary, have also worked hard to support us. A huge thank you, to all of them.

A Tribute to Our Founding Chair

As we reflect on another year of impact, we take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to our founding Chair, Katharine Sarah Del Tufo, whose vision, dedication and compassion have shaped RCLC since its inception in 2007.

A passionate advocate for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, Sarah has devoted herself wholeheartedly to the cause. Her steadfast commitment to social justice, tireless fundraising efforts, and unflagging support for our staff and community have been nothing short of inspiring. Her leadership has not only helped sustain RCLC but has also allowed it to grow into a trusted and vital part of Reading's support landscape.

Prior to the founding of RCLC, Sarah was a long-serving member of the Advisory Group at the WEA Women's Learning Centre. Her longstanding engagement with women's education and empowerment in Reading laid crucial foundations for the work we do today.

With over four decades of experience in local government, the voluntary and community sector, and community development – including 21 years as Principal Consultant and CEO of the Evaluation Trust – Sarah brought exceptional insight, strategic thinking, and compassion to her role. Her guidance and care have shaped not just the organisation, but the culture and community we are proud to be part of.

We thank her for her extraordinary service and enduring legacy. RCLC would not be what it is today without her unwavering belief in the power of community, dignity, and hope.



Who We Are

Based in Central Reading, RCLC has been operating as an independent charity since 2007, and as part of national charity, Workers' Education Association, since the mid-1990s. We have over 20 years of experience in delivering services to support traditionally 'hard-to-reach' refugee and migrant women. Many of the refugee and migrant women we support speak little or no English and often have limited experience outside of the home; as a result, many are amongst the most isolated and vulnerable members of our community. RCLC provides women with:

- A safe, women-only space for learning and support
- Free training classes and workshops
- Social opportunities and community events
- On-site crèche facilities
- 1:1 information, advice and guidance

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

Our mission: To empower women through education, social support, volunteering opportunities, and advocacy for equal treatment, rights, and opportunities.

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

Our services are designed to build confidence, increase skills and reduce social isolation. In **2024-25**, we supported **595** women on our core programmes from **41** different countries of origin.

We have **9 key objectives** which enable us to offer comprehensive and tailored support services:

1. Provide safe, accessible first-step educational opportunities that build confidence, independence, language, and pre-employment skills for excluded ethnic minority women.
2. Support progression into further education, volunteering, and employment through partnerships, volunteering opportunities, employer links, and social enterprise.
3. Engage women facing cultural, religious, and social barriers through outreach and research to encourage learning and integration.
4. Deliver holistic, women-centred support and advice that removes barriers to education, integration, and employment while meeting individual needs.
5. Promote intercultural understanding, mutual respect, and friendship to strengthen community cohesion
6. Create opportunities for learners to influence the Centre's direction and voice their concerns to external agencies.
7. Expand supported volunteering for learners and host community members to enhance skills, friendships, integration, and progression.
8. Involve marginalised ethnic minority men where culturally appropriate or when specific needs arise.
9. Build strategic partnerships with voluntary, statutory, and private sector organisations to expand and strengthen opportunities for learners



Objectives, Activities, and Public Benefit

The charity's objects are for the public benefit in the Reading area, specifically:

- The relief of poverty and needs of the socially/economically disadvantaged.
- The promotion of racial and religious harmony.
- The advancement of education about issues relating to migrants and refugees.
- The relief of financial hardship by providing information, advice, and support.

The trustees have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives.

Key Activities undertaken to achieve these objectives:

- Provision of free, women-only ESOL, sewing, IT, maths, and wellbeing classes.
- Operation of a free crèche to remove barriers to learning.
- Delivery of comprehensive Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) and outreach support.
- Partnership working to refer learners to specialist services (e.g., benefits, housing, mental health).
- Creating a safe, inclusive community space to reduce isolation and build confidence.



Staffing

During the 2024/2025 period, the organisation was led by a dedicated CEO who worked with trustees to develop the centre and forge new partnerships. The team saw significant changes with the retirement, after 15 years, of long-serving outreach worker and tutor, Shaheen Kausar. Her passion, dedication and sympathetic support & advice both as a tutor and an outreach worker over the last 15 years has benefitted and helped so many women and their families living in Reading. RCLC are hugely grateful to Shaheen for her work. Since retirement she has returned to RCLC in April 2025 as both an outreach volunteer and trustee.

Rohama Kanwal joined RCLC in June 2024 but left in October; however, two new part-time outreach workers, Samar Al-Tamimi and Pooja Vacchani, were successfully appointed in January 2025.

The teaching team consisted of seven sessional tutors delivering courses in sewing, beauty, English, wellbeing, IT, ESOL with maths, and online yoga. The crèche team also saw changes as supervisor Premalatha Sudarshan resigned to care for her parents but remained as a bank worker, while Sumera Rashid joined as a new crèche worker.

A significant development was the appointment of a Business Development Manager, Helen Bligh, funded by The National Lottery. Although she transitioned to a consultant role in August 2024, the funding was repurposed to create a Centre Manager post to be recruited in autumn 2025. This new role is designed to strengthen leadership, provide operational support, and mitigate key person risk by allowing the CEO to focus on strategic goals like income diversification and partnership development. This restructuring aims to enhance organisational resilience and secure sustainable funding.

CEO Report

In this eighteenth anniversary year for RCLC, I am delighted to present our annual report for 2025. This year, more than ever before, the work of RCLC has been a lifeline. Behind every statistic is resilience in the face of extraordinary challenges. As we reflect on 2024/2025, I am filled with both pride and urgency.

Our Centre has stood shoulder to shoulder with women who have endured the weight of poverty, the isolation of language barriers, the trauma of displacement, and the fear of an uncertain future. In the past year, the cost-of-living crisis has bitten deep into our community. We have witnessed mothers struggling to choose between heating their homes and feeding their children, and women trapped in unsuitable housing, sometimes in overcrowded hotels where they and their children felt unsafe. The voices we hear every day speak of anxiety, fear, and exclusion. These are not distant problems, they are realities faced right here in Reading, and they have intensified the need for the safe, supportive space that RCLC provides.

We supported 595 women this year, an astonishing 17% increase from last year. Our staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to provide not just classes, but dignity, compassion, and hope. From running crèche sessions to offering 2,344 advice sessions, we adapted to meet the soaring demand. Even so, our waiting list remains high, with 80 women still waiting for the chance to learn and grow with us.

Yet amid these challenges, there has been joy and light. Women who arrived with no English now confidently navigate doctor's appointments, schools, and shops. Learners have built friendships that transcend cultural and language barriers, forming bonds that give them strength and belonging. Afghan women, long denied education, have sat in classrooms with their children cared for in our crèche, finally able to claim their right to learn. Elderly women, once isolated, taking part in online yoga and health courses, improving their wellbeing and confidence.

We are hugely grateful to our funders, partners, volunteers, and staff who make this possible. We are incredibly proud too that RCLC was chosen as one of the Mayor of Reading's charities of the year, raising both awareness and vital funds to continue our work.

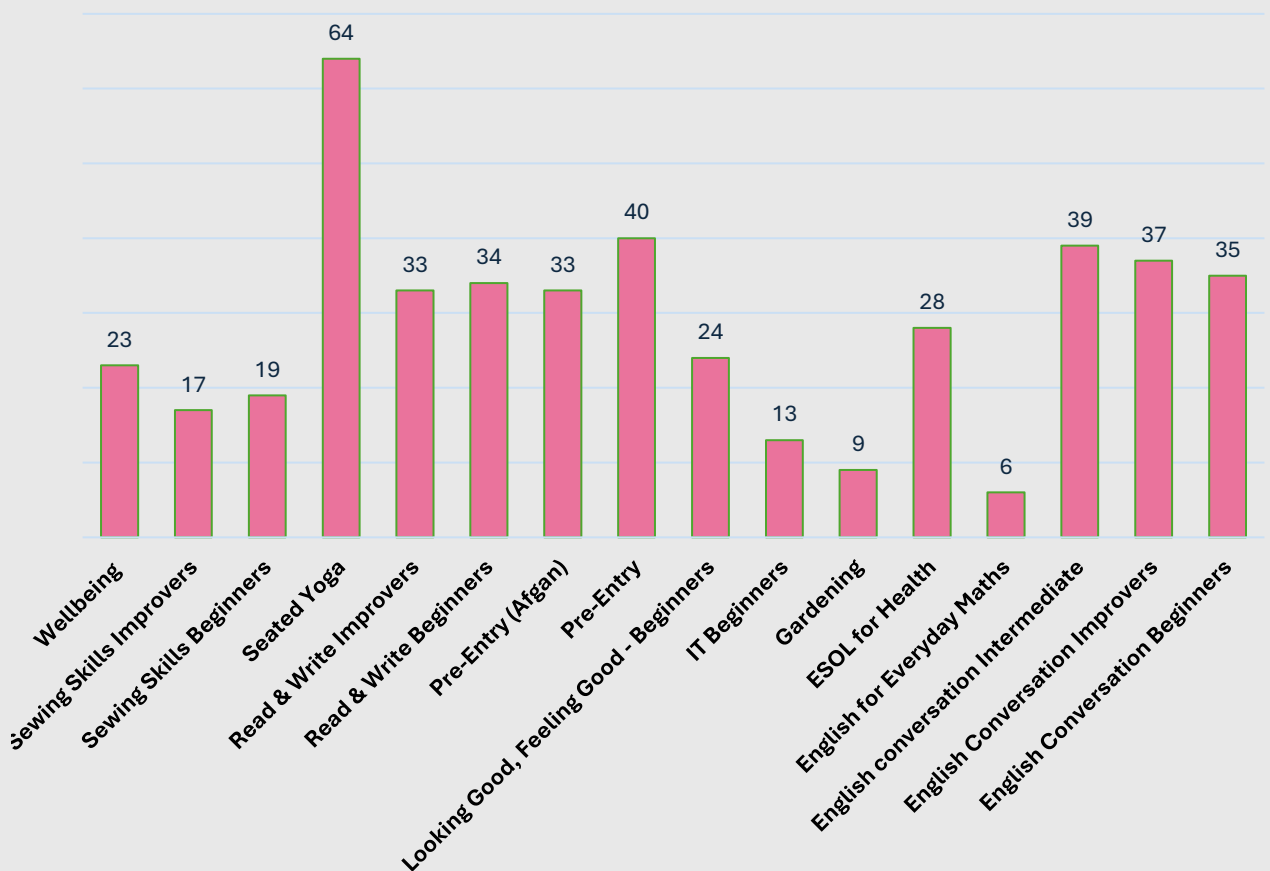
But the truth is stark: the demand for our services outstrips our capacity. Every day we see the human cost of systemic inequalities, and we know that without RCLC many women would remain invisible, excluded, and alone. It is only through sustained support and investment in women-led, community-based charities like ours that we can continue to break cycles of poverty, isolation, and despair. As we look ahead, we remain committed, passionate, and unwavering in our belief that every woman deserves the chance to live with dignity, confidence, and hope. RCLC is not just a learning centre, it is a community of courage, compassion, and possibility. Together, we will continue to ensure that no woman is left behind.



Academic Year 2024/2025

- **595** learners participated in our programme of courses. All courses were taught in face-to-face classes except for the seated yoga course which was taught online. The total number of learners who attended each of these core programme classes can be seen in the chart below. Of these 595 learners;
 - **64** of them were elderly Indian and Pakistani women with pre-existing health conditions completed the online yoga course
 - **28** elderly Nepali, Indian and Pakistani women completed the ESOL Skills for Health Course over the three terms
 - **28** elderly Nepali, Indian and Pakistani women completed the ESOL Skills for Health Course.
- **9** women completed the 5-week health and wellbeing gardening programme in partnership with Food 4 Families at the Museum of English Rural Life Garden. Women learnt to grow various teas and herbs to flavour food, share stories and knowledge about plants and make new friends.

Total Number Of Learners Per Course Over The Academic Year 2024/2025



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 and learning aims in Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are discussed termly by tutors with learners.

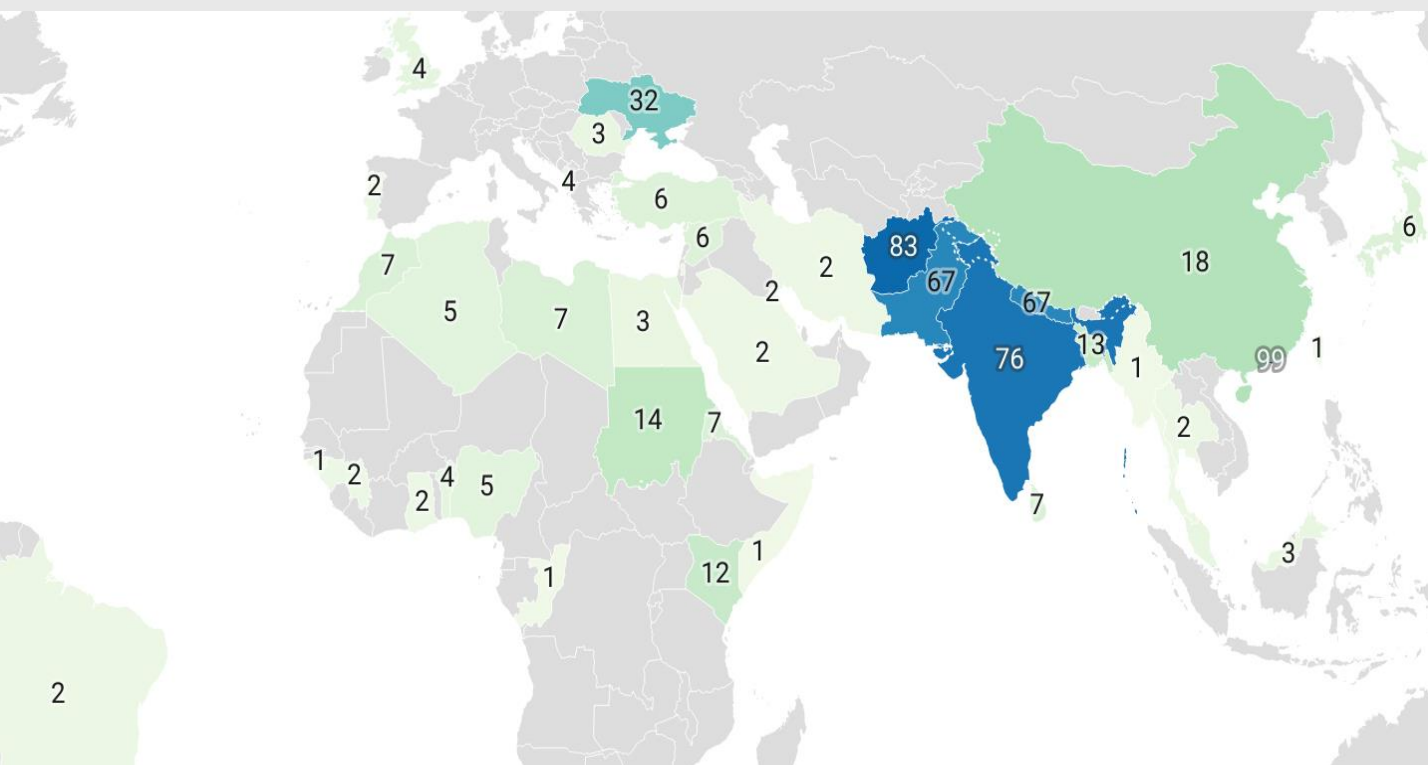
As part of the quality assurance procedures, regular teaching observations are undertaken which monitor methods of delivery, assessment, management of diversity, and equal opportunities, e-learning contributions and learners' comments. All tutors and crèche staff are qualified and supervised. Observations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

- **98%** of our core programme learners have no UK qualifications or are at an entry level in ESOL
- **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)
- **12%** of our learners use the crèche, a lifeline for those who cannot afford childcare costs and without it they could not use the Centre
- **11%** of our learners are refugees and **12%** are asylum seekers, whilst **52%** of the learners had not been living in the UK for more than 3 years
- **2%** of 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 have not been living here for more than 3 years.
- **72%** of our learners progressed onto internal courses at RCLC, **12%** progressed onto accredited courses with the WEA, Reading College or New Directions (last year it was 9%) whilst **12%** progressed onto other courses in the community. The remaining **4%** progressed onto employment and volunteering
- **14%** of learners have a degree or higher from their home country (this is 11% less than last year) but struggle to get work because of their lack of English and difficulties in qualifications getting accepted.
- This year learners speak **35** different languages with most 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%.

Learner Countries of Origin



Learner Quote: *“The Centre offers more than just learning. We are offered help in different aspects of life and are told about how to access that help.”*

Learner Demographics for 2024/2025

- 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.
- 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%).**
- 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 **22%** of our learners came from these specific areas.
- Postcode-based indices of deprivation mask the true extent of poverty faced by ethnic minority women and those in temporary accommodation, refuges, and hotels in central Reading. As data is averaged across whole areas, people in precarious housing (**23%** of RCLC learners live in temporary accommodation and hotels in Reading) are rendered invisible. When combined with the 22% living in officially deprived postcodes, 45% of learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds, far higher than postcode data suggests. National evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Equality Trust shows these measures underestimate ethnic inequalities, leading to underfunding and obscuring the lived realities of minority communities unless more detailed data is used.



Learner Quote: *“RCLC has taught me to be in the moment. To enjoy the moment, I’m in and be grateful for it. Not to carry the past issues and problems with me all the time”*

Supporting Refugees & Asylum Seekers

Supporting Syrian, Afghan, Hong Kong BNOs and Ukrainian Refugees

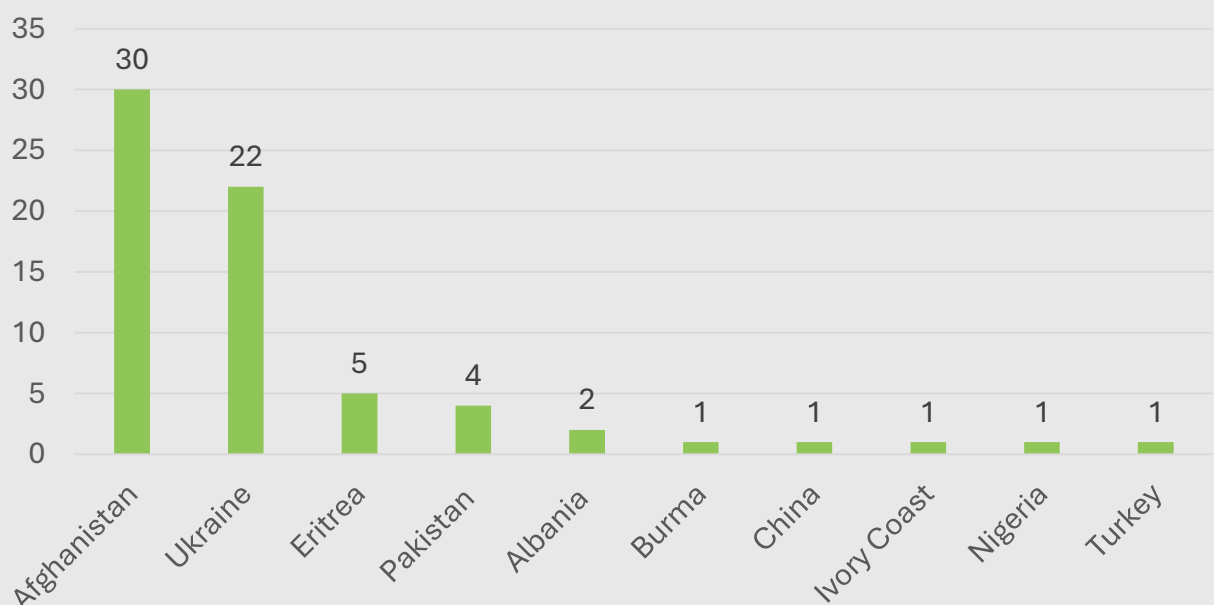
The Centre collaborates with the Refugee Support Group (RSG) to help Syrian, Afghan, and Ukrainian refugees, especially women, by providing access to ESOL classes and community resources. Partnering under Reading Borough Council's "Closing the Gap" initiative, the Centre connects refugees with immigration advice and critical services. It participated in case management meetings, like the Syrian Vulnerable Placement and Relocation (SVPR) and Afghan Resettlement Scheme (ARAP), until these were replaced by the multi-agency Sanctuary Partner Forum in 2023, supporting Ukrainian, Afghan, Syrian, and Hong Kong nationals. Our culturally sensitive, women-only environment continues to be crucial for refugees unable to access mainstream provision.

Sadly, when 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 fewer Ukrainian nationals come to the Centre. Although this year RCLC have seen a slight increase in numbers of the number of Ukrainian refugees attending RCLC classes (5%) (last year it was 4%). Overall, they make up 32% of the refugee numbers. We are continuing to work in partnership with the Council and local partners to support any Ukrainian refugee women who need our support

As of the 2024/25 academic year, refugees and asylum seekers make up 22% of the Centre's learners, a slight drop from 25% the previous year. The largest number of refugees and asylum seekers at RCLC were from Afghanistan in 2024/2025.

RCLC has seen more Hongkongers than in previous years due to the UK's British Nationals Overseas (BNOs) visa scheme, launched after China's national security law in 2020. Many BNO holders moved to the UK to escape political pressure and seek greater freedom. In the academic year 2024/25, 17% of our learners were Hong Kong BNOs. Hong Kong BNOs made up the largest proportion of our learners this year

Total Number of Refugees In 2024/25



Learner Quote: *"It is a very good place. For a few hours, you forget about everything else."*

Supporting Refugees & Asylum Seekers

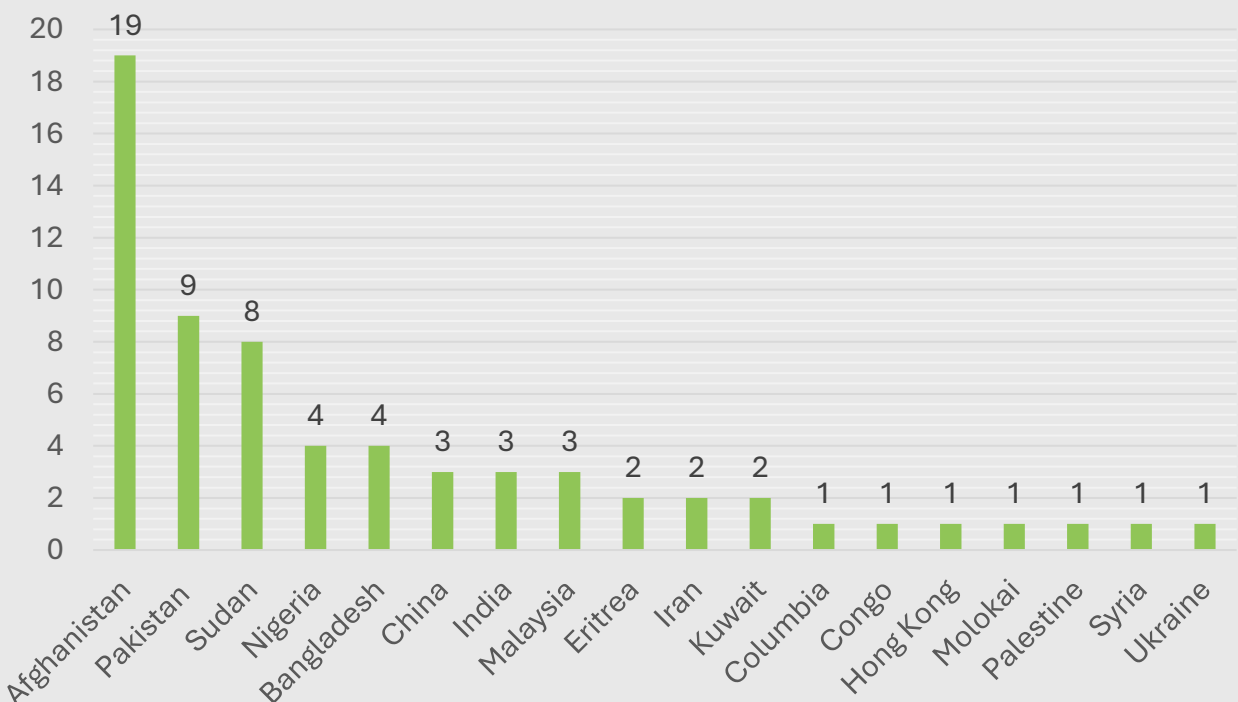
Afghan Women’s English Classes with Creche Support

In August 2024, RCLC launched a one-week pre-entry English class for Afghan women, funded by Reading Borough Council. The course was designed to meet the needs of women who required English language learning alongside creche support, as childcare had been a significant barrier to participation. Learners were referred by the Refugee Support Group, and many faced additional challenges, including limited literacy in their first language due to being denied access to schooling in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the programme was disrupted after just two sessions because of the summer 2024 riots, which targeted hotels, accommodations and organisations supporting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. However, thanks to continued support from Reading Borough Council, we were able to restart with a fully funded 10-week course with creche provision in Autumn 2024, and again in Spring and Summer 2025.

We are deeply grateful to the Council for recognising the importance of these classes and for committing to extend the programme into the 2025/26 academic year. These classes not only provide essential language skills but also create a safe and supportive environment led by a female tutor who speaks the learners’ first language, enabling Afghan women to build confidence, independence, and community connections.

Total Number Of Asylum Seekers In 2024/25



Learner Quote: *“The best thing was my tutor and my classmates. In a strange country, it feels like a gift to be here; I feel like they are my family and my community, as I can’t contact my family in Afghanistan. “*

RCLC Core Programmes

We supported **595** women on our core learning programme this year, an astonishing 17% increase from last year. Our staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to provide not just classes, but dignity, compassion and hope.

- English Conversation Classes with built in progression (pre-entry through to intermediate level),
- Reading And Writing Classes (beginners and improvers),
- Sewing Classes (beginners and improvers),
- Looking Good Feeling Good Classes (beauty and health)
- ESOL for Everyday Maths Classes (Autumn 2024 only)
- Health and Wellbeing Classes
- ESOL Skills 4 Health Classes
- Online Seated Yoga Classes
- Afghan Women Pre-Entry Conversation Classes
- Gardening Workshops at the Museum for English Rural Life (MERL) (summer 2025 only)
- Jelly Arts and RCLC All Roads Community Art Project (autumn 2024 only)

RCLC learners gain vital soft skills like confidence, communication, and cultural understanding, alongside hard skills in English (ESOL), sewing, IT, and health knowledge. In a supportive, women-only centre, they build resilience, self-sufficiency, and employability, fostering both personal empowerment and integration into their new communities.



Learner Quote: *“I can speak to other people without hesitation. I have the confidence to speak to others. And feel seen and heard.”*



Learner Quote: *“I have started reading stories with my five-year-old and that is a great bonding time too. He asks me if I have any homework and offers to help me with it. I like getting involved and being active. I get bored at home I want to feel productive.”*

Enrichment Activities and Advice Sessions

- **60** women attended termly Chai and Chat sessions as part of our 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 per term at the Centre. 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. Some sessions focused on wellbeing whilst making jewellery
- **148** women received presentations about CommuniCare's services from their volunteer advisor based at RCLC. Thanks to our partnership with CommuniCare (through the RBC Closing the Gap Outcome 1) an advice volunteer from CommuniCare joined the RCLC team to give benefit and advice sessions once a week during term time, helping 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. Around **20** one-to-one advice sessions took place per term.
- **428** 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.
- **18** women in the Intermediate Conversation Class attended a presentation in June 2025, by Steve Hendry from Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) on what volunteering is, how to register with RVA, the benefits of volunteering to the volunteer and the organisation to help women build their CV with some work experience skills.
- **19** women received a presentation from SmartWorks on their services which provides coaching, interview prep and a capsule wardrobe for a job interview to the improvers conversation class
- **13** women from the ESOL Skills for Health class visited the Reading Urgent Care Centre so that they knew where it was, when they could access it and when this service should be used. They also spoke to staff to find out more information allowing them to practice the skills learnt in class.
- **206** learners took part in the end of term certificate presentations and learner celebrations (50 in autumn, 66 in spring and 90 at the summer picnic at the MERL).

Learner Quote: *"The Centre is very welcoming, and they embrace everyone. Everyone has equal opportunities to participate."*



Enrichment Activities and Advice Sessions

- **113** 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.
- **25** women from the English classes visited the Museum for English Rural Life (MERL) and **15** visited the Reading Museum as part of their learning and enrichment activity
- **30** 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.
- **33** women attended the tea workshop in partnership with MERL and Dadima's Walks (Geeta Ludhra). Learners brought an object of interest from their country or one that they use for food or tea, to act as a conversation opener and have the museum space as a way of hosting the conversation. Geeta brought her Indian tea spices and tools to evoke conversations about her home country and tea traditions, try tea from around the world and talk about their own learner journeys to this country
- **12** women from the English Conversation Classes visited Swallowfield Village Coffee Club for morning tea, coffee and delicious English cakes
- **15** women in the intermediate class attended the New Directions College Open Day as part of their progression information. They were all accepted and enrolled onto the accredited New Directions College classes
- **37** learners received a presentation from New Directions College staff on community interpreting courses and volunteering at the college. This was to encourage and support progression opportunities for the learners at RCLC to New Directions College
- **17** women took part in the focus group led by the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership with the aim of finding out about BAMER women's experience of maternity care at the Royal Berkshire Hospital

Swallowfield Village Coffee Club Visits

In 2018, RCLC built a strong friendship with the Swallowfield Coffee Club after the group generously donated proceeds from their summer fundraising. To thank them, RCLC hosted a cultural exchange with tea, Asian sweets, and shared stories, which created lasting connections and valuable opportunities for learners to practice English with native speakers. The relationship has since flourished, with yearly visits for organisations offering learners both cultural enrichment and language practice. In 2025, **12** women from RCLC's English Conversation Classes visited Swallowfield for morning tea, coffee, and cakes, while the Coffee Club volunteers joined RCLC's end-of-term picnic at MERL with **90** women. The celebration included certificate presentations, world foods, and community sharing, strengthening bonds between learners, volunteers, and both organisations.



Health and Wellbeing

The Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2021–2030), encompassing Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham, places reducing health inequalities at its core. It explicitly prioritises communities in the top deciles of deprivation, noting that health outcomes from maternal care to life expectancy are markedly worse in these areas. Women from ethnic minority backgrounds face structural barriers: lack of interpreters, poor health literacy, culturally insensitive services, and discriminatory experiences within NHS and mental health care (kingsfund.org.uk)

A systematic review confirmed that ethnic minority women experience higher rates of undiagnosed mental illness, access services primarily via emergency routes, and incur higher healthcare costs and poorer outcomes

A British Red Cross 2025 mental health report highlights how asylum seekers often avoid reporting symptoms or signing obligations due to fear of detention adding chronic stress to an already traumatised group (mentalhealth.org.uk)



Community Wellness Outreach (CWO) Project: RCLC Health Day and Health Checks

In January 2025, RCLC became a key partner in the Community Wellness Outreach (CWO) project, funded by the Integrated Care Board (ICB), to tackle health inequalities in Reading's most vulnerable communities, particularly those at risk of cardiovascular disease. As part of this initiative, RCLC hosted NHS Health Checks on-site for learners, combining clinical assessments with holistic follow-up support to empower individuals to take control of their health.

The programme, led by the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust's Meet PEET team, provided specialist nurses for tailored checks, including diabetes tests, height/weight management, and blood pressure monitoring, supported by interpreters and RCLC outreach workers. RVA coordinated the wider project with partners, also offering social prescribing focused on cardiovascular health. At RCLC, 13 women received checks in November 2024 and a further 12 women received checks in February and June 2025, each receiving personalised advice, signposting, and follow-up care from RCLC outreach workers and the RVA Inclusion Manager.

RCLC also ran a Women's Wellbeing Health Day in June, attended by around 50 women. The event included 19 women attending yoga taster sessions, 25 women receiving free hand massages for women, 11 health checks, and access to a wide range of health information and NHS services, including TB, immunisations, cervical screening, and maternity support. These activities are vital in reducing health inequalities, improving access to healthcare, and supporting long-term wellbeing in marginalised communities.

Health and Wellbeing

Wellbeing Classes

In the 2024/2025 academic year, RCLC offered three 10-week wellbeing courses across three terms to **23** women. Tailored for ethnic minority refugee and migrant women, the course was designed by RCLC's bilingual tutor with an ESOL background to teach mindfulness, stress, and anxiety management in simple English. Participants were referred by social prescribers, partners, RCLC outreach workers, or self-identified a need for support. The course aimed to provide women with accessible techniques for identifying and managing stress, along with guidance on seeking specialist help when needed.



Online Seated Yoga

In the academic year 2024/2025 RCLC delivered three 10-week online seated yoga classes for elderly Pakistani and Indian women with pre-existing health conditions over 3 terms to **64** women.

Our classes offer accessible wellness, promoting physical health, stress relief, and social connection. A bilingual tutor bridges language gaps, making techniques easier to understand and culturally inclusive, while fostering comfort and trust. This approach enhances participation, confidence, and holistic well-being.

ESOL Skills 4 Health

In the academic year 2024/2025 RCLC delivered three 10-week classes for elderly Pakistani, Nepalese and Indian women with pre-existing health conditions over 3 terms to **28** women. This course aims to empower women by teaching them English to access health services by enhancing their understanding of local health services, healthy lifestyle choices, time management, and self-care practices for physical and mental health. Through a combination of classroom learning and field visits, participants develop practical skills for managing their health and accessing services effectively.

Learner Quote: *“I look forward to my Mondays with Simran for yoga. It motivates me for the week. She is a truly wonderful, experienced, sympathetic teacher. She listens to your needs and accordingly does the seat yoga. She is always smiling, friendly and listens to us. The exercises get me motivated, are flexible and help my joints and body. The exercises I do on Monday help me for the rest of the week. Simran is so motivational and enthusiastic that she keeps us going and I look forward to it every Monday.”*

Information, Advice and Guidance

The Centre provides support and guidance to learners, especially women facing challenges like trauma, refugee experiences, or social isolation. It offers help with accessing benefits, navigating domestic violence issues, and managing immigration concerns. For many women, especially those with limited language skills or outside experience, adjusting to society is overwhelming. The Centre often serves as a primary help point, which has become even more essential during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, as simple referrals may not suffice for those needing more intensive support.

Building on the Centre's current support work with around **70 - 90** vulnerable ethnic minority women per month. Thanks to funding from the **National Lottery in Dec 2022**, for an additional Outreach Worker/ Social Prescriber for 14 hours per week, offering a listening ear, active signposting and referral for those requiring weekly support calls we have been able to support **65%** more sessions than last year (last year it was 1,446)

The support for clients consists of:

- Guidance on progression, courses, Covid, and flu vaccines, and healthcare access
- Support with accessing food parcels, benefits, housing, clothing for children, and NHS health services
- Translation, form-filling, and aid for refugees and asylum seekers, including appointment support
- Weekly benefit surgeries via CommuniCare partnership
- Fortnightly mental health support surgeries with Together Outreach
- Referrals to Reading Voluntary Action Social Prescribers
- Mental health support from a trained first aider, with referrals to Talking Therapies, Adult Social Care, Together Outreach and Refugee Support Clinics



Learner Quote: *“I was finding it very difficult before I came to RCLC. I was in a hotel for 2 years and then I was homeless after I got my visa. I was sleeping in different churches every night; I’m grateful to the church for providing me that support. It was very difficult, specially being a woman. I was feeling very helpless back then.”*

Information, Advice and Guidance

Over the academic year 2024/2025 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

Other referrals were made to Utulivu, Wycliffe Church, Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE), Citizen Advice Reading (CAR), CRUSE Bereavement, RBC Social Prescribers, 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. Out of these women **28%** 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. Refugee Support Group has been our largest referrer this year, referring **89** women over the academic year 2024/25 (an increase of 31% from last year) to RCLC. 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
- **67** women were referred by the Pakistani Community Centre (PCC)
- **40** women were referred by Job Centre Plus
- **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

Case Studies

Learner A's story:

"I came to the UK 10 months ago as a refugee from Afghanistan. My husband is disabled, and I have never been to school as I was never allowed to go outside. My brothers used to attend classes at the temple, but I never got the chance.

I joined RCLC 3 months ago to learn English, and I came with my son to enrol in classes. I had no confidence and found it difficult to open up and speak. I wanted to help my family make appointments, and I wanted to be able to understand and solve any issues I may have.

I feel great since I joined the Pre-Entry class in RCLC. I've always wanted to go to school, and now my dream has come true, and I am so happy. I have made new friends in the Pre-Entry class, and I have received a lot of information and help from RCLC's staff and teachers. I recommend everyone new to the UK to come to RCLC and start their new life."



Learner B's story

Learner B is a warm and dedicated mother of three from Hong Kong. She joined our Beginner's Conversation class with very little English and was initially quite shy. However, from the very beginning, it was clear she was eager to learn and determined to improve her speaking and listening skills.

One of her main reasons for learning English was because one of her children has ongoing health problems, and she wanted to feel confident when speaking to doctors and understand medical information. She also wants to be able to communicate more easily with her children's teachers and feel more involved in their education.

Despite her busy family life, she has shown excellent commitment to her learning. She attends class regularly and always tries her best, even when things are challenging. Over time, she gained confidence and made steady progress, which allowed her to move up to the Improvers Conversation class. In this group, she has become more talkative and willing to join in with class discussions. She also helps and encourages other students, which shows how supportive and community-minded she is.

Looking to the future, her goal is to become fluent in English and find a way to work in the community. She's passionate about helping others and hopes that, once her English is strong enough, she can support people who are going through similar experiences, especially those who may also struggle with the language.

Her journey so far has been inspiring, and we're proud of the progress she's made. With her positive attitude and determination, there's no doubt she'll continue to grow in confidence and ability.

Case Studies

Learner C was born in an African country and came to the UK alone a couple of years ago for personal and safety reasons. She moved to Reading last year and liked it here but found the food very expensive. She heard about RCLC through a flyer placed at her building. When she arrived at RCLC there were waiting lists, but she was keen to learn so signed up.

Learner C said, *“I find the centre is really nice and very well organised. I like the warmth and the atmosphere. I benefitted in many ways. The health checks are great. It’s great that the checks were brought to us in the Centre. It is much easier to follow up and get help after the checks and for me it was really important as I needed medical help”*

Learner C felt supported with her health after joining RCLC but faced a lot of loneliness, partly as she wasn’t working. However, a referral to Talking Therapies was a good source of support. Student A has struggled with her health and because she does not have enough money for healthy food she is struggling. She has made lots of friends at RCLC and feels that they will be with her even after her beauty class finishes and often meets them in town.

RCLC helped Learner C to get to know Reading. She was able to navigate the place in a safe way. She said, *“it is a much better option than getting wrong information and can be dangerous to take it from other sources. I have gained a lot of knowledge and confidence and I’m very happy I’m here. It doesn’t feel like a wasted effort, coming here.”*

Learner C completed the beauty beginner's course and used the skills she’d learnt on a neighbour’s daughter. She made her a new hairstyle for her birthday. She said, *“I felt really happy to see the wide smile on that girl’s face and to see that she was so happy, but also to be able to save my neighbour some money and come in use in someone’s time of need. The centre offers more than just learning. We are offered help in different aspects of life and are told about how to access that help. The centre is so welcoming, that when you feel like going again and again. It is not a chore going to the classes, as it can be at other places.”*



Learner D is a woman in her early 60s from Nepal who came to the UK over 4 years ago. She has no family in the UK and relies on her friends for help. Her friends informed her about RCLC and the services on offer and she decided to enrol at RCLC to improve her English. She decided to enrol on the ESOL Skills 4 Health Course.

Whilst on this course, she has learned about calories and how to read food labels, information about diabetes, and registering with the doctor. She hopes to use the healthy eating information in her daily life to feel good about herself and stay fit. Learner D said, *“I have loved attending this course and I get a chance to meet my friends and learn new things at the same time!”*

Case Studies

Learner E originally from Morocco settled here during lockdown, Sadly, her husband became ill after two years and left to live in Morocco. Learner E was left feeling isolated and lonely. She had no goals, or interests of her own to pursue. She had no contacts, and her children were busy with their own lives. She was hesitant to go out into the community because of her weakness of language.

After two years of living in Reading, she had overheard two ladies talking in Arabic at a supermarket and approached them. She asked them where they were from. They were also from Morocco. She asked them how they learned to speak English, and they told her about RCLC and brought her to the centre. She wanted to learn English, and to be involved in her local community. Her isolation at home was driving her towards a depression and she began to lose her confidence.

Coming to this centre has changed her life drastically for the better. She used to sit at home isolated and alone, without any friends. She didn't have the courage to go out, but after coming to these classes, everything changed. Her confidence has increased, she can communicate with people, has made friends, can offer support to her children and is emotionally in a much better place. Simply put, she is happier. Her tutor Parveen has had a powerful impact on her. She said, *"Parveen teaches much more than English language. She encourages and offers support in a way that has expanded my thoughts and assured my soul."* She has helped her regain her confidence through the use of language and expression.

She also received health support through the health checks and accessed advice from the Communicare volunteer advisor at the centre.



Learner F is a woman from Afghanistan who moved to the UK when the war broke out and was initially a refugee in Pakistan. She is in her late 50s and has children who are all computer literate but don't have the time or motivation to teach her. She complained that her daughter gets frustrated with her slow pace of learning on the computer. After hearing about the IT course through word of mouth, she decided to join and was pleasantly surprised.

She has enjoyed the IT course and learning the basics like using the mouse trackpad and opening and closing files without any pressure was wonderful for her.

"The course was really helpful in learning how to navigate around computers, and I started off with a very basic level of understanding. I could not double click using the mouse but by the end of the course I made my own PowerPoint presentation!"

Learner Evaluation & Progression

At the end of each course every learner completes a learner evaluation form. The statistics below summarise the learners' feedback from their classes over the academic year 2024/2025:

- **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 **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.
- **98%** 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 confident in their everyday lives.

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 significance 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 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 Feedback

Interviews

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.

1. 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: *I was finding it very difficult before I came to RCLC. I was in a hotel for 2 years and then I was homeless after I got my visa. I was sleeping in different churches every night;. It was very difficult, specially being a woman. I was feeling very helpless back then.*
- A number mentioned that people are kind and helpful and its multicultural nature is valued.

2. 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:

3. Experiences 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 and new skills from 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: *It is a big support and allows women to relax.*

Learner Feedback Interviews

- 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 had gone online and found out what was available.
- After visiting the Centre and their needs being 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 next or the following terms class.

4. Impact on Learners' Lives

The difference RCLC makes is striking.

- **Language Development and other new skills:** 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 and 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.

6. 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: *Coming to RCLC is not just about learning a language, for me, it was the start of a new journey that changed my life.*

Learner Feedback Interviews

7. 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.

Learner Voice

- In Summer 2025's Learner Voice feedback, learners emphasised how much they value the Centre as a welcoming, supportive, and culturally respectful space that reduces isolation, provides childcare, and makes learning accessible. They raised practical suggestions for improvement, such as replacing carpets with hard floors to address allergies, upgrading toilet facilities, and offering a wider range of classes, including evening sessions for those who work during the day. There was also discussion around enrolment systems to ensure fairness and learner commitment, alongside debate on whether introducing paid classes would widen opportunities or create barriers. This feedback reflects the learners' strong engagement with shaping how the Centre can continue to meet their needs.
- The importance of Learner Voice lies in the way it fosters deeper engagement, ownership, and collaboration between learners and the Centre. Since its launch in 2016, the forum has enabled learners to contribute ideas that have shaped fundraising initiatives and influenced strategic planning. However, the pandemic and its ongoing impact on staffing, resources, and the ability to gather in person caused a delay in restarting the learner voice group. Despite this, its revival in summer 2025 with support from the outreach worker and volunteers highlights the learners' ongoing commitment to having a voice in decision-making. By prioritising this dialogue, the Centre not only ensures that its programmes remain relevant and inclusive, but also empowers learners, strengthening their sense of belonging and investment in the community.



RCLC Creche

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 2024/2025, **83** 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.
- **100%** of the parents thought that their child had learnt new things and that their knowledge had improved.
- **54%** said that the care their child received in the creche was excellent whilst **46%** said it was good.
- **100%** of the parents/ carers thought that their children were safe in the creche.
- **70%** found that the information they received on their child's development in the creche was excellent and **30%** said it was good.

Learner Quote: *“The creche is one of the best things about RCLC. I couldn't learn at Reading College because they have no creche and my friend recommended to me to go to RCLC. I was alone at home before and bound with young children. I am happy now that I am learning. I can now go to my appointments alone. I no longer need a translator. I can express myself better and understand what is being said to me. “*



RCLC Volunteers

In 2024/25, RCLC relied heavily on the support of its volunteers, who play a vital role in sustaining the Centre alongside a small number of part-time staff. Volunteering provides learners and community members with opportunities to contribute, develop skills, and in some cases move into paid employment.

This year, RCLC engaged **14 learner volunteers**:

- 5 classroom volunteers,
- 3 admin/reception volunteers,
- 5 translation volunteers, and 1 outreach volunteer.

In total, including ex RCLC Staff and students, **19** volunteers supported the Centre across the year. Notably, long-term volunteer and retired teacher, Rita Parr, who first joined in 2015, returned in spring 2025 as a classroom volunteer after briefly stepping back in 2024. The former crèche supervisor also rejoined as both an admin and translation volunteer.

RCLC also welcomed three University of Reading students—Ting, Kiangyan, and Eshal—into the volunteer team. Ting and Kiangyan provided essential admin and translation support, particularly assisting Hong Kong BNO learners. Eshal contributed as an outreach volunteer, using her translation skills to increase the depth of learner interviews and feedback, and she will return in September 2025 as part of her university placement.

RCLC extends heartfelt thanks for their invaluable time, skills, and dedication.



Learner Quote: *“Coming to this Centre has changed my life drastically for the better. I used to sit at home isolated and alone, without any friends. I used to do my household chores and watch TV or social media. I didn’t have the courage to go out because I didn’t know the language. I thought, how are people going to understand me? they will laugh at me. But after coming to these classes, everything has changed. Especially, being in Parveen’s class. Parveen teaches much more than English language. She encourages and offers support in a way that has expanded and assured my soul. She helped regain my confidence in myself through the use of language and expression. She encouraged me, not to settle and give up. I am indeed indebted to her and to everyone at the Centre.”*

RCLC Partnerships

The Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) has continued its active engagement with local steering groups and forums after the pandemic, enhancing its role in health and wellbeing initiatives in partnership with Reading Borough Council (RBC) and other health organisations. Key collaborations include RBC Closing the Gap Meetings, RVA led Compact and VCS Leaders Meetings, Sanctuary Partners Meeting led by RBC, Mental & Physical Wellbeing Health Forums, Health Inequalities Steering Groups, and Physical Disability and Sensory Network Meetings, where RCLC contributes to community health strategies and action plans.

RCLC's Tackling Poverty partnership (funded by Reading Council) with voluntary organisations, such as the Refugee Support Group, Communicare, ReadiFood, CIRDIC, Starting Point, CCA and Reading Welfare Rights, strengthen its support network for learners, especially women. By advocating for women's issues and involving women's voices directly, RCLC influences local policy and shares insights with other organisations. It also maintains informal ties with RVA's Social Prescribers, Citizens Advice Reading, and various ethnic community groups, expanding support for its learners.

Since the pandemic, RCLC has increased its outreach through new partnerships and additional referral channels, broadening activity options for women. In 2024/2025, RCLC remained involved in RBC and RVA-led forums and also participates in the Reading Integration Board for Health Inequalities, New Directions College's ESOL Providers Network, CPAR (racial equality research), and the CareWell Research Project with the University of Reading. These engagements allow RCLC to share best practices, strengthen community ties, and enhance its positive impact on the lives of women and families in Reading.



Reading Borough Council Funded: "Closing the Gap" (CTG) Program

This programme, previously under the "Narrowing the Gap II" framework, funds services in Reading to reduce poverty, discrimination, and disadvantage, promote wellbeing, and foster thriving communities. Funded by Public Health, Adult Social Care, Housing, Neighbourhoods, the Resources Directorate, and additional Clinical Commissioning Group support, CTG focuses on three key outcomes with separate funding allocations:

- 1. Reducing Poverty:** £270,300 per year.
 - 2. Building Resilience and Wellbeing:** £551,700 per year.
 - 3. Supporting Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure:** £158,000 per year.
- RCLC partnered with six charities—Communicare, Christian Community Action, Starting Point, ReadiFood, Reading Welfare Rights, and CIRDIC—to secure funding for Outcome 1. Additionally, RCLC partnered with the Refugee Support Group for Outcome 2, focusing on supporting refugee, migrant, and asylum-seeking families. These three-year partnerships began in November 2022 and will conclude in November 2025.
 - Achievements from Nov 2022- July 2025 (11 quarters)
 - Outcome 1 include providing **advice to 800 women** annually (target: 250 per year), offering **courses to 388 women** (target: 102 per year), and **providing creche services to 66 children** (target: 18 per year).
 - Outcome 2, the Centre supported **213 elderly Pakistani and Indian women** in seated yoga (target: 30 per year), **155 elderly Nepali women** in ESOL Skills For courses (target: 30 per year), and provided **outreach to 1,610 women** (monthly target: 45).

This funding has significantly supported RCLC's core mission. The figures are inclusive of the core RCLC figures.

RCLC Partnerships

New Directions College

RCLC completed a two-year partnership with New Directions College (ND), delivering non-accredited programmes for 120 migrant and ethnic minority women in 2022/23, funded through the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) fund. This programme successfully engaged vulnerable learners in Reading, widening participation and promoting lifelong learning, with RCLC achieving its full target of 120 learners.

Although the contract ended in summer 2023 due to changes in government priorities, RCLC continued working with ND through the Multiply Project, running ESOL embedded maths classes from spring 2023 to December 2024. These 10-week courses built everyday numeracy confidence, covering cooking, shopping, budgeting, bills, helping children, and using transport timetables. Since launch, **45 learners** completed the maths courses, including 6 in autumn 2024. ND quality reviews highlighted RCLC's strong teaching, safeguarding, and administration, with no recommendations for improvement.

In 2024/25, ND College rented RCLC as a teaching venue twice weekly, generating rental income and progression opportunities. This collaboration has led to more RCLC learners moving onto accredited courses. In summer 2025, RCLC arranged a class trip to the ND College Open Day, resulting in all intermediate learners successfully enrolling on ESOL courses that September. Overall, **9%** of RCLC learners progressed to accredited provision this year, demonstrating the effectiveness of the partnership in supporting learner progression and building sustainable educational pathways.

Jelly Arts

In autumn 2022, RCLC began a creative partnership with Jelly Arts, delivering an eight-session sewing programme funded by Reading Borough Council's Small Grants Programme. Six sessions were held at RCLC and two at Jelly Arts in Broad Street Mall, where **7 learners** developed hand-sewing skills, built friendships, and created a small quilt displayed at RCLC. The project helped reduce isolation while encouraging creativity and community connection.

Building on this success, Jelly Arts secured further funding to launch the *All Roads – Community Arts Project* in autumn 2024. This 10-week course explored heritage and personal stories through fabric, knitting, and crochet. **Seven learners** participated, with some sessions hosted at MERL, where their finished artworks were proudly displayed in 2025.



Partnerships & Research

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 and in Summer 2024 for 9 learners; RCLC ran a 5-week course called Chai and Other Stories linking with gardening in the Summer 2025 term. A total of 9 learners completed this course. The aim of the project was for learners to;

- Grow fresh ingredients for Chai (tea) and to flavour our food
- Learning about gardening in the UK climate
- Sharing knowledge about our favourite plants and how to grow them
- Looking after ourselves and the MERL garden



Transnational Families in Europe: Care Inequalities and Wellbeing (Carewell Research Project) University Of Reading

RCLC has played a central role in shaping policy and service development in Reading by advocating for learners and ensuring their concerns are heard by decision-makers. The CareWell study, a two-year collaboration with the University of Reading and the Refugee Support Group, explored the care experiences, inequalities, and wellbeing of transnational families, with a particular focus on the Reading community. Using community researchers with lived experience, the project generated powerful insights that directly reflect the realities faced by learners and their families.

The study revealed the heavy care responsibilities carried by transnational families, particularly the “middle generation,” who must simultaneously support children in the UK and elderly relatives abroad. Restrictive family reunification policies intensify this burden, causing significant emotional and practical strain. Another striking finding was the unrecognised contribution of young people acting as “language and digital brokers.” These children navigate complex healthcare, welfare, and legal systems for their families, roles that, while vital, create stress, isolation, and premature loss of childhood.

Barriers to healthcare access also emerged as a critical issue. Limited availability of professional interpreters leaves many migrants dependent on children to translate in sensitive situations, highlighting systemic inequities in service provision.

For RCLC, this research strengthens advocacy efforts by evidencing learners’ lived realities and amplifying their voices in policy debates. The study concludes with key recommendations:

- Reduce barriers to family reunification.
- Improve provision and accessibility of ESOL classes.
- Formally recognise and support young caregivers.
- Secure stable, long-term funding for third-sector organisations like RCLC.
- Develop inclusive, intercultural services designed through community-led collaboration.

Thank you!

Quiz Night and Silent Auction

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 who chose RCLC to be one of his **Mayoral Charities for 2024**.

The Mayor and his amazing team for hosted a fantastic Quiz and Silent Auction evening in support of Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) and the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG).

It was an honour for RCLC to be chosen as one of the Mayor's charities this year. We were privileged to share more about our work and the vital role RCLC plays in supporting, educating and empowering women from diverse and often marginalised backgrounds in Reading.

The evening was filled with laughter, friendly competition, and heartwarming generosity, all in the name of raising funds for two mighty local causes. It was a brilliant night out and a wonderful reminder of the strength and spirit of our community. The total amount of funding raise for RCLC £2,318.50



London Marathon- Emma Diaz

RCLC would like to say a huge thank you to **Emma Diaz** for running the London Marathon on 27/4/25 and raising vital funds for Reading Community Learning Centre. It was a hot day, but Emma absolutely smashed her target raising £1648 for RCLC! Emma's incredible dedication and effort, both in her marathon training and her fundraising, will make a real difference to the lives of the women we support. Thanks to her determination, we are able to continue providing education, support, and opportunities to those who need them most in our community. We are so proud of Emma's achievement and deeply grateful for her support.



Individual Donation

RCLC extends their deepest gratitude to **Maurice Dixon** for his incredibly generous donation of £10,000. At a time of real financial challenge, his support arrived at a pivotal moment, enabling us to keep our doors open and continue serving the community without interruption. His generosity has had an immediate and lasting impact, ensuring that those who rely on our services can continue to find support, care, and opportunity, and it will be remembered by both our team and the many individuals whose lives have been touched by this gift.

Thank You!

**Thanks to our funders, the commitment and passionate work ethic of our staff, trustees and volunteers for an amazing year
We know next year will be even better than the last!**

In August 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, rolled up their sleeves and freshened up the centre to make it bright and welcoming. 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



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 to:

- Reading Borough Council Closing The Gap SLA Agreement
- Reading Borough Council Small Grants
- Reading Borough Council Household Support Fund
- Berkshire Community Foundation
- Anton Jurgen Trust
- Shanley Foundation
- Berkshire Nurses and Relief in Sickness Trust (BNRST)
- Cumber Family Trust
- Reading University Community Fund
- ICB Funded Community Wellness Outreach Project in Community Wellness Outreach Project: Partnership with RVA and MEET PEET (Community Health Checks)
- The National Lottery
- 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 New Directions College and TeachitRight



Statement of Financial Activities

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 March 2025

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2025 Total Funds	2024 Total Funds
	£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM				
Charitable activities				
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	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

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible assets	4,292	-	4,292	3,871
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	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	(10,217)	(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				
Unrestricted funds			69,949	96,297
Restricted funds			79,495	45,971
TOTAL FUNDS			149,444	142,268