READING SAMARITANS
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1 APRIL 2025 TO 31 MARCH 2026

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 2026.

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.

- telephone calls (16,726 in 2024/25)
- emails (276 in 2022/23) The reduction is numbers is due to the email service being phased out by the central Samaritans Charity.

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 2025/26 performance is summarised on the table below.

Category	Time	Target	Reading Sams 2025/26	Reading Sams 2024/25
Twilight	22.00 – 02.00	20%	13.9%	17.2%
Overnight	02.00 – 06.00	10%	15.4%	14.9%
Total hours of need	22.00 – 06.00	30%	29.3%	32.1%

We are consistently in the top 20% of branches nationally in terms of achieving hours of need coverage overnight. This takes effort from volunteers and Rota Secretaries alike and is something to be celebrated!

Key Developments

The Central Samaritans Charity launched a consultation with branches on their 'Future Proofing Samaritans' strategy in June 2025. The strategy was developed in response to:

- Declining volunteer numbers (nationally)
- A challenging financial position for the central charity
- A high unanswered call rate during hours of need

The strategy includes some significant changes, including a reduction in the number of branches; cessation of some services including email and the school visiting programme and the introduction of an 'at home' listening service where volunteers would take calls in their own homes rather than in a physical branch of Samaritans.

The Branch Director convened four branch meetings to discuss the Future Proofing proposals during July/August 2026 and invited all volunteers to share their views either at a meeting, via email or over a cuppa and a chat. A summary of branch feedback was then approved by Trustees and submitted to the Central Charity, in line with their consultation process. As a result of the feedback received from all branches, the Central Charity has opted to pilot the changes in three Samaritans regions between 2025/6 – 2028/9, so that risks and benefits can be assessed prior to wider adoption. The Home Listening Service will be tested during 2026, initially via a very small scale pilot project.

In order to both anticipate the Future Proofing requirements of increased hours of need coverage and to ensure that we provide a service when callers most need it, we completed a rota review in Autumn 2025 and have since made some changes to our rota, reducing Sunday shifts and increasing the number of volunteers on our early morning shifts. This has worked well, although we have needed to iron out some issues around mentored shifts.

Volunteer numbers have remained reasonably stable throughout the year, although with some monthly fluctuations. We continue to take active steps to improve retention such as social events, thank you cards and training 'interest' events on topics of interest to volunteers. In 2025/26 we reintroduced volunteer support groups, in the form of 'Pub Club', a regular informal event open to all volunteers. This has proved to be popular with volunteers and has been well attended.

We complete a trial running two, larger cohorts of initial training during the calendar year 2025 starting in March and September. This approach was successful, and we were able to train 26 new volunteers in 2025/26, with 22 of the new trainees entering mentoring. We have retained this pattern of training sessions in 2026/27.

Ongoing Mentoring was completed during 2025. 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

Our outreach work has continued this year through strong partnerships and a sustained presence within the local community. The team have supported key events across the Reading area, including Woodley Carnival, Reading Pride and Outside25. These events offer valuable opportunities for volunteers to engage directly with members of the public, raise awareness of our service, and provide emotional support from trained volunteers whenever needed.

We have also continued our initiative of renting a space on Broad Street in the town centre, enabling us to be at the heart of the community and extend our reach to those who may not otherwise encounter our service. Feedback from both volunteers and members of the public has been consistently positive, and these events remain a successful part of our outreach programme.

A key partnership for the outreach team continues to be with Network Rail. Our Network Rail lead has worked closely with colleagues at Central Office to assess and strengthen provision across the local rail network. Engagement events have been held at Reading Station and Reading West Station, allowing volunteers to speak with commuters and staff, raise awareness of our service and offer support where needed.

Work within the schools team has also progressed well, with visits to many local secondary schools and sixth-form settings. Workshops for students, and some for staff, have focused on the importance of talking and listening, encouraging open conversations and promoting emotional wellbeing.

Branch Improvements

Reading branch is currently as energy efficient and up to date technologically as we can take it. We have also expanded the number of duty stations in our operations room to four.

In November we replaced our aging standalone CCTV system with a higher definition one that gives better security coverage and allows remote access and playback by the facilities and management teams if required. The retention period for any recordings is seven days as recommended by SCO.

Our biggest improvement was an expensive necessity replacing seventeen metres of our failing main sewer pipe with a modern plastic alternative. The blistered decades old pitch fibre pipe caused frequent blockages leading to disruption and some shift closures. The work took five days to complete at a cost of £10,650 but considerate management by the works contractor resulted in very little branch closure time. We have experienced no further issues since the work was completed in December 2025.

We will hopefully continue with our postponed 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 have a branch interest event scheduled in November 2026, where we will offer interactive training sessions on topics nominated by Reading volunteers, as well has some time to socialise.

We will continue to review and update our rota, and we are active participants in the Regional Rota Review working group, which aims to ensure good coverage of shifts, and in particular of hours of need, across South Region.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Results for the Period

Income from all sources amounted to £39,329 while total expenditure was £39,850, which resulted in a minimal loss for the year of £521 mainly due to a drain repair that cost £10,650.

Financial Highlights

Reading Samaritans received some very generous support in the year that helped offset the drain repair meaning we continue to be in a good financial position for the upcoming years to come.
We also received generous support from local businesses, groups and individuals in the period. These include George Michael Fundraising Event Team, 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 £1.4K 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 £3.0K in subscriptions in the period.

We are fortunate to 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 Earley Charity and £0.3K from Englefield Trust to support our Outreach and Training activities.

Most of the expenditure barring fixing a long standing Drainage issue was incurred on centre running costs, centre facilities updates and ensuring we are properly insured for our activities.

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 2026 were 20.0 months or £65,284 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 Earley Charity. At 31st March 2026, there were £2,133 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

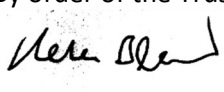
No remuneration was paid to any of the Trustees. Where appropriate, Trustees have been reimbursed for expenses incurred in performing their duties as a Listener, in their Management/Support Volunteer roles or as a Trustee. As with all expenses, these are reviewed and approved by at least 2 signatories. 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	*Director and Chair*
Steven Scott	*Vice Director from 18/4/25*
Hetal Patel	*Secretary*
Justin Bedingfeld	*Treasurer*
Darren Jones	
Sophie Mcbean	
Sarah Bowsher	
Atul Khetarpal	
Elizabeth Hayes	*to 9/10/25*
William Dixon	*from 9/10/25*
Nicola Chessher	*from 9/10/25*
Emma Fraser	*from 9/10/25*

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS

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 March 2026	**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 31 March 2026

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 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.

Signed:		**Date:**	13 September 2026
Name:	Christine Holland		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	CPFA		
Address:	9 Ellerton Close, Theale Reading RG7 5QN		

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

Receipts and payments

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026	Last Year
		£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Donations	2	12,719	-	12,719	7,571
Revenue Grants	3	1,955	2,930	4,885	3,922
Fundraising	4	20,903	-	20,903	24,045
Bank and Building Society Interest	5	823	-	823	902
Total receipts		**36,399**	**2,930**	**39,329**	**36,440**
Payments					
Direct and Charitable Expenditure	6	33,820	797	34,617	33,620
Fundraising Costs	7	2,452	-	2,452	2,268
Management and Administration	8	873	-	873	699
Contribution to Central Charity	9	1,913	-	1,913	2,011
Total payments		**39,057**	**797**	**39,854**	**38,598**
Net of receipts / (payments)		**-2,658**	**2,133**	**-525**	**-2,158**
Cash funds last year		**67,938**	**0**	**67,938**	**70,096**
Cash funds this year		**65,280**	**2,133**	**67,413**	**67,938**

Statement of assets and liabilities as at 31 March 2026

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026	Last Year
		£	£	£	£
Cash funds					
Coop Current Account		2,275	0	2,275	4,718
HSBC Deposit Account		6,588	0	6,588	5,403
Virgin Money Deposit Account		56,417	2,133	58,549	57,817
Total cash funds		**65,280**	**2,133**	**67,413**	**67,938**

NOTES TO THE RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

(1) Accounting Policies

Basis for Accounts Preparation 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 2026 £	Last Year £
Individuals	802	-	802	1,249
Churches	1,000	-	1,000	1,000
Groups in the Community	8,484	-	8,484	0
Gift Aid	1,432	-	1,432	2,700
Bequests	257	-	257	1,817
Street Collections	745	-	745	805
Total	**12,719**	-	**12,719**	**7,571**

(3) ***Revenue Grants***

Revenue Grants	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026 £	Last Year £
National Offender Management Service	1,955	797	2,752	2,039
Earley Charity	-	1,800	1,800	-
Englefield Charitable Trust	-	333	333	-
Groundwork	-	-	-	1,883
Total	**1,955**	**2,930**	**4,885**	**3,922**

(4) ***Fundraising***

Fundraising	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026 £	Last Year £
Business and Corporate Fundraising	4,500	-	4,500	11,000
100 Club	3,042	-	3,042	3,107
Volunteer Initiated Fundraising	2,627	-	2,627	2,024
FIT Payments	1,004	-	1,004	1,328
Festival Branch Store Rental	550	-	550	550
Sarah Millican	-	-	-	653
Easy Fundraising, Amazon Smile etc	8,928	-	8,928	5,309
Other	252	-	252	74
Total	**20,903**	-	**20,903**	**24,045**

(5) ***Bank and Building Society Interest***

Bank and Building Society Interest	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026 £	Last Year £
HSBC	90	-	90	89
Virgin	733	-	733	813
Total	**823**	-	**823**	**902**

Details of Expenditure

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

Direct and Charitable Expenditure	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026 £	Last Year £
Fabric of the Centre	11,075	-	11,075	5,265
Maintenance Contracts	4,501	-	4,501	3,848
Utilities	6,948	-	6,948	5,964
Housekeeping	4,936	-	4,936	5,180
Equipping the Centre	1,591	-	1,591	2,089
Volunteer Expenses	992	-	992	91
Outreach	1,228	-	1,228	564
Committee Hospitality and Other Costs	-	-	-	19
Volunteer Recognition and Retention	2,549	-	2,549	3,227
NOMS (see Restricted Expenditure Note)	-	797	797	1,690
Postcode Lottery	-	-	-	3,800
Groundwork	-	-	-	1,883
Total	**33,820**	**797**	**34,617**	**33,620**

(7) ***Fundraising Costs***

Fundraising Costs	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026 £	Last Year £
Raising Branch Income	382	-	382	403
100 Club	2,070	-	2,070	1,865
Gift Aiding of Expenses	-	-	-	-
Total	**2,452**	-	**2,452**	**2,268**

(8) ***Management and Administration***

Management and Administration	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026 £	Last Year £
Phone Calls	-	-	-	132
Travel Claims	14	-	14	94
Stationery and Postage	47	-	47	-
Professional Fees	35	-	35	35
AGM and Annual Review	777	-	777	438
Total	**873**	-	**873**	**699**

(9) ***Contribution to Central Charity***

Contribution to Central Charity	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds Year Ended 31 March 2026 £	Last Year £
Branch Contribution	1,913	-	1,913	2,011
Total	**1,913**	-	**1,913**	**2,011**

(10)***Restricted Funds***

Restricted Funds	1st April 2025	Income	Expenditure	31st March 2026
National Offender Management Scheme (NOMS)	-	797	797	-
Earley Charity	-	1,800	-	1,800
Englefield Charitable Trust	-	333	-	333
Groundwork	-	-	-	-
Total	-	**2,930**	**797**	**2,133**

Restricted funds include the following:

- NOMS grant for our Huntercombe Prison support
- Earley Charity for Outreach Activities to March 2027
- Englefield Trust to support Training Activities