



With thanks to RVA's partners and funders:



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Registered charity number: 1045782 Company registration: 2982252
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+READING
VOLUNTARY
ACTION

Community Place

The centre for social action in Reading





Community Place is a partnership space based on the top floor of Reading's Central Library building. It offers offices, hot desks, and conference facilities for local non-profit organisations, with free wi-fi throughout.

For more details about the facilities, see www.rva.org.uk/community-place. To book a room or desk or enquire about our rates, please email info@rva.org.uk or contact us on 0118 937 2273.

Third Floor, Reading Central Library,
Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ

Access: if the Library is closed, access to Community Place is via the back of the Library building. Press the buzzer to gain access.

Contact RVA

For news, information and resources go to www.rva.org.uk

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Welcome to Community Place, the centre for social action in Reading

When national and global issues seem so large and numerous, how can we make a positive impact? Many people in Reading are taking up the challenge to improve our town and life for its residents. Reading Voluntary Action exists to promote and support the individuals and groups who make up our diverse voluntary and community sector.

RVA is committed to connecting communities across Reading and to improving health and wellbeing for the most vulnerable. We therefore support projects that aim to reduce loneliness and social isolation, and which deliver better outcomes for children, young people and families.

In these politically and economically uncertain times, we know that collaborative working is vitally important, so we are developing the partnership space on the third floor of Central Library into a centre for social action in Reading. The name Community Place expresses our values of embracing the diversity of the town and empowering individuals and communities to create sustainable change. It's also about our belief that social action makes an essential contribution to the health and democracy of our society.

Rachel Spencer
RVA Chief Executive



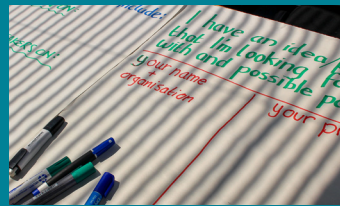
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Connecting communities in Reading

RVA News

You can find all the latest voluntary and community sector news for Reading – including jobs, funding opportunities, events and training – on our website and in our weekly newsletter. Sign up for RVA News at www.rva.org.uk/subscribe. Look out for our information booklets, too, in print and online, promoting and publicising local organisations, activities and services.



Ready Friends

The Ready Friends project supports individuals and groups wanting to take positive action to reduce loneliness and social isolation. The quarterly Befriending Forums are for anyone from local communities, groups and organisations, and are an opportunity to network and explore ways of addressing local need and improving people's lives. The Ready Friends Toolkit, developed in partnership with Reading Neighbourhood Networks, is a printed and online resource to inspire and equip people in Reading wanting to take action on loneliness and social isolation. Find out more at www.rva.org.uk/ready-friends/toolkit.



RVA FACT

In 2018–19 Get Online Reading had 33 volunteers supporting 340 sessions for more than 1000 people.



Get Online Reading

Our digital inclusion project makes use of Reading's highly IT literate population to help those who don't have the skills or opportunity to access the internet. Get Online volunteers run drop-in sessions in libraries and community venues where anyone can get help with the internet, email or a new smartphone or tablet. Get Online works in partnership with organisations – including the Salvation Army, Reading Deaf Centre and lunch clubs for older people – to ensure that everyone who needs it has access to support.

GET
online
READING

Social Prescribing

RVA and Age UK Berkshire work in partnership to deliver a Social Prescribing service, linking people to non-medical sources of support in the community. The service accepts referrals for people who are registered with Reading GP practices (including Mortimer, Pangbourne and Theale). The Social Prescribers see a great variety of people from 18 years upwards – carers, people with physical or mental health problems or those who are just feeling lonely.

RVA FACT

The Social Prescribing service had 253 referrals in 2018–19. Improvements for clients are measured against all aspects of a wellbeing star, with an average improvement of 25% in the categories of 'feeling positive' and 'work, volunteering, and other opportunities'.



Improving the lives of young people and families

One Reading

One Reading is a multi-agency partnership committed to delivering better outcomes for children, young people and families, and developing a local consensus on how to work together. RVA sits on the One Reading strategic partnership board and produces One Reading News, a bi-monthly newsletter for everyone working in health, education, special educational needs and disabilities, children's social care, early help, the youth offending service, and the voluntary and community sector. The newsletter features news, upcoming events and training and development opportunities, resources and good practice, and profiles of people working across the One Reading partnership. Sign-up at www.rva.org.uk/one-reading-subscribe.



Whitley Schools Partnership

RVA is part of a partnership with primary schools across Whitley which aims to create a safe space at schools to meet with parents and guardians of primary school-age children, discuss concerns that affect their daily lives and introduce parents and guardians to the voluntary and community sector as it applies to their interests and/or obstacles and provide 'assisted signposting' for services, in Whitley and in Reading at large.



Stronger Together – Support for Parents

The Stronger Together partnership is a Building Better Opportunities project funded by the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund. It offers free help to people, aged 25 or older, who need support to get into employment, or move closer to employment. As part of this project, RVA's School and Parent Engagement Officer works with parents, schools and partners across sectors to maximise the opportunities available for parents and help them overcome any barriers to employment.



Youth Partnership and Summer Youth Activities Programme

RVA's Youth Project Coordinator has engaged voluntary organisations across the town to form a Youth Partnership, map need, identify gaps and seek funding to address those needs.

In summer 2019, RVA coordinated a Reading Youth Summer Activities programme for three weeks, across South, West, Central and East Reading. Events were aimed at 10 to 14-year olds and were all completely free. RVA worked with Sports Xtra, Reside Dance, Real Time Video, Reading Refocus, The Rock Academy, Reading FC's Community Trust Kicks, Lamda Drama/Rediculture One30 and fitness volunteer Eugenie Rotjes Nicholls, to provide young people with free activities that they could engage in, learning new skills and having fun along the way. The events were a huge success, with over 100 children attending 350 sessions across the different venues and activities.



Supporting the voluntary sector to grow and thrive

Advice service

RVA's advice service provides free help with the technicalities of starting and running a charity or voluntary organisation in Reading, including governance, employment, safeguarding and funding. We offer an online knowledge base and one-to-one appointments with our Advice Worker.

"Thank you for the clear explanations and for raising things I had not thought about."



In 2018–19, we provided advice to 131 different organisations on 459 occasions.

Training

We run affordable training courses, forums and networking events throughout the year. Training covers a wide range of topics from trustee duties, volunteer management, and employing staff to finance and safeguarding.

"It was wonderful to work with practical examples and I liked being with a group of people at various stages of trustee experience and knowledge."



In 2018–19, we ran 22 training courses and events with 284 attendees.

RVA Safe + Sound Governance Mark

The RVA Safe + Sound Governance Mark is a self-assessment tool plus follow-up consultation which gives your charity, trustees and beneficiaries confidence that a basic level of governance has been reached.

"I have had the benefit of the expertise of Herjeet Randhawa, who is guiding me through writing various policies and procedures used in the governance of the charity, which has been and continues to be a great support and invaluable in helping our charity through this process."



20 organisations have now been awarded Safe + Sound and a further 76 are engaged in the process.

Funding support

RVA hosts funding fairs and one-to-one sessions so that organisations can receive updates and advice about projects from funders including The National Lottery Community Fund, Berkshire Community Foundation, Crowdfunder and the Lloyds Foundation. This is followed up with governance support from RVA.

Voice

RVA works in partnership to enable the voluntary sector to collaborate and have influence. We ensure the voluntary sector is represented at a strategic level by attendance at the Berkshire West A&E Delivery Board, Reading Integration Board and the Neighbourhood Care Planning Group. We host Wellbeing Forums where organisations can keep up-to-date with changes in health and social care and identify potential area for partnership working.





Encouraging volunteering and social action

Volunteer matching service

Every year we post hundreds of volunteering opportunities from different organisations on our website. Whether through www.rgneeds.me, our base at Community Place on the third floor of Central Library, or out and about in the community, we are passionate about helping potential volunteers find roles which suit them and make a difference.



I thought it would be virtually impossible to find someone to volunteer as a treasurer of a small group we help set up but we have had two excellent candidates volunteer through the advert that RVA put out.

RISC

Team Reading

Our Team Reading service continues to grow, supporting organisations in managing the recruitment of one-off volunteers for events such as Reading Half Marathon, the reopening of Reading Abbey, and Disability Awareness Day.

Supporting and enabling vulnerable adults

The right volunteering opportunity can provide a host of wellbeing benefits to individuals, from allowing them to stay active and connected to their local community to developing new skills and giving a sense of purpose. We work with partners to enable individuals to access meaningful opportunities to volunteer in a welcoming and supportive environment.



In 2018–19, the volunteering pages of our website had 67,767 views

Volunteer Coordinators Network

Our Volunteers Coordinators Network meets quarterly to offer peer support, share information, and discuss a wide range of volunteering issues.

Reading Volunteer Awards

Every year in Volunteers' Week at the beginning of June, RVA celebrates the extraordinary contribution that volunteers and volunteering make to life in our town. The third annual Reading Volunteer Awards took place on 6 June 2019, at a drinks reception on the fourteenth floor of Thames Tower. The evening brought together members of the local community to take in the views over Reading, enjoy food supplied by the Global Café at RISC, and thank volunteers nominated by organisations across the town for their work to make Reading the unique, vibrant and creative place it is.

To celebrate Volunteers' Week 2019, we also held an exhibition in the HolyBrook Gallery in Reading Central Library. The exhibition was curated by Kate Shorey with an eclectic mix of exhibits on display, representing the diversity of volunteers and volunteering opportunities in the town. Kate also created a wordagram, drawing on volunteers' own descriptions of what volunteering means to them.



In 2018–19, 309 face-to-face volunteering appointments took place

