



Reading Advice Network
Information for Reading Councillors
V4 May 2024

ReadingAdviceNetwork

supporting charities to give
quality information and advice



Advice and Information in Reading

Introduction

1 This booklet was suggested by two RBC Councillors, Rachel Eden and Adele Barnett-Ward. It is designed to help Councillors across Reading quickly find the relevant sources of specialist information and advice for constituents who come to them with problems. It is produced by the Reading Advice Network and is in three parts:

- A An introduction to the Reading Advice Network (RAN)
- B A list of the issues on which RAN member organisations give information and advice
- C Brief descriptions of each RAN member organisation

A The Reading Advice Network

2 RAN is an umbrella organisation that brings together and supports charities to give quality information and advice to people in Reading. It currently has 22 member organisations, a Quality Standard, holds regular Advice Forums, and runs a CEOs' peer support Group, and an HR Group.

3 It was established in February 2016 following a 'Big Lottery' funded project, with strong support from Reading Borough Council, particularly for its Quality Standard. Member organisations make a commitment to achieve that Standard and Reading Voluntary Action's 'Safe and Sound' Governance Standard.

B Issues

4 The table below lists, in alphabetical order, the many different types of issue on which RAN member organisations give information or advice, and for each issue, the relevant organisations.

Issue	Relevant organisations
ADHD	Parenting Special Children
Adults with learning disabilities	Reading Mencap
Asylum	Acre Citizens Advice Reading; Refugee Support Group (Reading)
Autism	Autism Berkshire
Benefits	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Citizens Advice Reading CommuniCare PACT Reading Mencap Reading Welfare Rights Refugee Support Group (Reading)

Children with learning disabilities	Acre Dingley's Promise Parenting Special Children Reading Mencap
Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities	Autism Berkshire Berkshire Vision Dingley's Promise Parenting Special Children
Community Care	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Citizens Advice Reading PACT
Consumer	Citizens Advice (consumer helpline 0808 223 1133)
Debt	Citizens Advice Reading PACT
Discrimination	Acre Citizens Advice Reading (from July) CommuniCare (all but mainly employment) Refugee Support Group (Reading) (against refugees and asylum seekers)
Domestic abuse	BWA No5 PACT
Education	ABC to read Acre CommuniCare Dingley's Promise Launchpad No5 PACT Parenting Special Children Refugee Support Group (Reading)
Employment	Berkshire Vision Citizens Advice Reading (from July) CommuniCare Graft (Thames Valley) Launchpad PACT RVA Refugee Support Group (Reading) The Mustard Tree (SP)
Energy	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Citizens Advice Reading
Family	ABC to read Citizens Advice Reading (from July) Dingley's Promise No5 PACT Parenting Special Children Reading Mencap

Hate crime	Acre Citizens Advice Reading (from July) Reading Mencap (against people with learning disabilities) Refugee Support Group (Reading) (against refugees and asylum seekers)
Health	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Autism Berkshire Berkshire Vision Citizens Advice Reading (from July) CommuniCare No5 PACT Parenting Special Children Reading Mencap RVA Refugee Support Group (Reading) The Mustard Tree (E) (R)
Homelessness	Citizens Advice Reading (from July) Launchpad PACT The Mustard Tree (R) YMCA Reading
Housing	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Citizens Advice Reading (from July) CommuniCare Launchpad PACT Reading Mencap Reading Welfare Rights Refugee Support Group (Reading) The Mustard Tree (R) YMCA Reading
Immigration	Citizens Advice Reading (OISC Level 1 only, from July) Refugee Support Group (Reading)
Later Life problems	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading
Law	Citizens Advice Reading (from July) CommuniCare PACT Reading Mencap
Money	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Citizens Advice Reading PACT
Relationships	Citizens Advice Reading (from July) No5 PACT
Refugees	Acre Citizens Advice Reading (post asylum, OISC Level 1 only, from July) Refugee Support Group (Reading)

Rights	Citizens Advice Reading (from July) CommuniCare (mainly benefit, employment and consumer rights) Refugee Support Group (Reading) (the rights of refugees and asylum seekers)
Sight Loss	Berkshire Vision
Social Care	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Parenting Special Children Reading Mencap
Students	ABC to read Reading Students' Union Advice Service (mainly housing and money)
Utilities	Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Citizens Advice Reading
Voluntary Sector operation	RVA
Volunteering	ABC to read Acre Berkshire Vision Refugee Support Group (Reading)
Wellbeing	Acre Age UK Berkshire Age UK Reading Autism Berkshire Berkshire Vision Citizens Advice Reading Dingley's Promise No5 PACT Parenting Special Children Reading Mencap RVA Refugee Support Group (Reading) The Mustard Tree (E) (SP) (R)
Young people	ABC to read Berkshire Vision No5 PACT Parenting Special Children Reading Mencap The Mustard Tree (SP)

C RAN Member Organisations

5 This section briefly describes the services offered by each member organisation, sets out their contact details, and explains how to refer individuals to them.

ABC to read (Assisting Berkshire Children)

ABC to read is a local, award winning charity dedicated to promoting literacy and supporting children who struggle with reading. Some of the key activities undertaken by the charity are:

- One-to-One Reading Support
- Literacy Workshops
- Parental Engagement
- Partnering with Schools
- Community Outreach

Overall, ABC to read is committed to improving literacy outcomes for children and empowering them with the skills they need to succeed academically and beyond. Through its dedicated volunteers, partnerships with schools, and engagement with the community, the charity strives to create a brighter future for children through the power of reading.



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 951 1336

Email: info@abctoread.org.uk

Website: www.abctoread.org.uk

Referral: Referrals can be by individuals, schools, councillors and others

Acre

The Alliance for Community Cohesion and Racial Equality (Acre) aims to bring together people from different backgrounds, embrace diversity and enable residents to make a positive contribution to Reading. Equality is the golden thread in everything we do and as such Acre manages a Community Wellbeing Hub on Oxford Road. We have an open Tuesday coffee morning with specialist speakers, bi-monthly free Health Checks, Sewing classes, Computer Literacy classes, Ukulele classes, and Art, Photography and Poetry workshops. Acre also manages the Community Health Champions Project and Hate Crime Forum in partnership with RBC.



Contact Details:

Phone: 07554 837693

Email: info@acre-reading.org

Website: acre-reading.org

Office: Middle Building, 344 Oxford Road, Reading RG30 1AF

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Age UK Berkshire

Age UK Berkshire provides both free and chargeable services for older people in Berkshire. Its free Information and advice is offered on a wide variety of topics of interest or concern to people in later life, family, friends or carers. It also offers free befriending and other loneliness-combatting activities. Age UK Berkshire covers the whole of Berkshire county.



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 959 4242

Email: info@ageukberkshire.org.uk

Website: ageuk.org.uk/berkshire

Office: Unit 119, Broad Street Mall, Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7QE
Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Age UK Reading

Age UK Reading provides vital information, advice and other services to support thousands of older people of all ages and backgrounds, including those from disadvantaged or marginalised groups. They offer a Footcare service, Befriending, Social activities, Shopping, Gardening, and Homeshare. Age UK Reading services cover the whole area of Reading.



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 950 2480

Email: info@ageukreading.org.uk

Website: ageuk.org.uk/reading

Office: Walford Hall, Carey St, Reading RG1 7JS

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Autism Berkshire

Autism Berkshire provides advice for autistic people of all ages and their families in Reading through the Berkshire West Autism and ADHD Support Service and the Berkshire Adult Autism Support Service - both services are NHS funded. Help is available while people are waiting for assessments and after diagnosis, through a helpline service, individual advice appointments and autism advice workshops and courses. We also offer accessible social and leisure activities for autistic children and adults.



Contact details:

Phone: 01189 594 594

Email: contact@autismberkshire.org.uk

Website: <https://www.autismberkshire.org.uk>

Office: 40 Caversham Road, Reading RG1 7EB

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves. Links to our online forms are at <https://www.autismberkshire.org.uk/referrals-to-our-services/>

Berkshire Vision

Berkshire Vision provides friendly and practical support to people with sight loss, helping to develop confidence and independence and the skills to navigate the world with safety and ease. It supports people of all ages from the tiniest babies to those over 100. Support includes Sight Loss Support Officers, technology and equipment to live independently with sight loss, employability, Children and Families activities, peer support/social activities including a dual sensory loss group, adapted sports, Realeyes Guiding to learn new routes, and telephone befriending.



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 987 2803

Email: referrals@berkshirevision.org.uk

Website: www.berkshirevision.org.uk

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, the individual themselves, or a carer/family member.

BWA

BWA serves the communities in Reading, Bracknell, Wokingham and West Berkshire providing domestic abuse accommodation and outreach community services to provide safety and a space to rebuild a future free from abuse. We also offer individual and group programmes, with specialist programmes for children and young people and male survivors of domestic abuse. We run a 24/7 helpline providing support and information about our services and signposting to other support for anyone affected by domestic abuse.



Contact details:

Phone: 0808 801 0882 Calls to the helpline are free from landlines and mobiles within the UK and DO NOT APPEAR on itemised bills.

Email: helpdesk@bwaid.org.uk

Website: www.berkshirewomensaid.org.uk

Office: 94-98 Addison Road, Reading RG1 8EG

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Citizens Advice Reading

Citizens Advice Reading provides a free, impartial, confidential information and advice service to help people with a range of problems including benefits claims and issues, debt and budgeting, and energy and utilities help and advice. From July 2024 we will also be giving advice on employment, housing, immigration, relationships and all other legal matters. This ranges from signposting and information, to practical support and casework, and will focus on guiding people through their options, rights, responsibilities and issues arising, such as identifying and dealing with types of discrimination.



Contact details:

National Citizens Advice Phone: 0800 144 8848

Textphone: 18001 0800 144 8884

Help to Claim - support for people claiming Universal Credit for the first time

Phone: 0800 144 8444

Textphone: 18001 0800 144 8444

Website: www.citizensadvicereading.org

Referral: Councillors can use our online partner referral form: www.citizensadvicereading.org/get-help/partner-referrals

Alternatively, clients can self-refer via an online form on our website:

www.citizensadvicereading.org/get-help

CommuniCare

CommuniCare offer non-judgemental, free information and advice on a wide range of topics including housing and benefits. They try to think of the "whole person" rather than just the "problem considered" and take a holistic view of the person and their issues to come up with a complete support package.

**Contact details:**

Phone: 0118 926 3941

Email: office@communicare.org.uk

Website: communicare.org.uk

Office: 233 Kings Road, Reading RG1 4LS

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Dingley's Promise

Dingley's Promise delivers life changing support to children in the early years with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families. We provide:

- specialist learning through play at our Reading Centre including term time nursery sessions and holiday playschemes
- families with information and support through our outreach service (accessible to all families in Reading with children with SEND - not just those who attend our Centre) including coffee mornings, stay and plays, and one-to-one support in the home
- training and advice to mainstream settings to be better able to support children with SEND inclusively.

**Contact details:**

Phone: 0118 327 7424/ 07940 259355 (Reading Centre) or 07388 943440 (for family support)

Email: admin.reading@dingley.org.uk (Reading Centre) or tanya.spiers@dingley.org.uk (for family support)

Website: dingley.org.uk

Office: Kennet Walk Community Centre, Kenavon Drive, Reading RG1 3GD

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Graft (Thames Valley)

Graft (Thames Valley) provides support, information and advice for people experiencing barriers to gaining meaningful employment. With both group sessions and one-to-one support, Graft offers a tailored plan of action to make each individual more employable.

The Graft service is open to anyone who is struggling to get into work, but is particularly suitable for those with mental health conditions of any kind, and those living with ASD or Aspergers.

**Contact details:**

Phone: 07483 341353

Email: info@graft.org.uk

Website: graft.org.uk

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Launchpad

Launchpad provides three key services, which help to prevent homelessness and support people individually and provide:

- a free, confidential Drop-In Information and Advice service on Mon, Wed and Fri 10 - 2 to anyone in Reading who needs housing or homelessness-related advice; and support for single parents, families, couples and individuals to stay in their own homes by helping them with landlord-related issues
- clean, safe housing combined with individual, targeted support to get people back on track; and
- a skills centre providing work readiness support, money management courses, and digital skills to help people move towards independence



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 950 7656

Email: enquiries@launchpadreading.org.uk

Website: launchpadreading.org.uk

Office: The Stables, 1A Merchants Place, Reading RG1 1DT

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

No5

No5 Young People provides free, confidential mental health support, 1:1 counselling and outreach for young people aged 11 - 25 who live, work or study across Berkshire West (RG postcodes). Their BACP Accredited counselling service is offered in-person in Central Reading, in 6 local secondary schools, online and over the phone. Their co-produced preventative and alternative mental health support and outreach takes place in schools, in the community and online including Mental Health workshops, Creative Expression Wellbeing programmes, School Transitions and School Exclusion support. Information and advice is offered online through co-produced digital resources, videos, factsheets and a monthly newsletter - created by Lived Experience Young Leaders and Young Ambassadors alongside professionals.



Contact details:

Phone: Counselling line: 0118 901 5668

Admin line: 0118 901 5649

Email: info@no5.org.uk

Website: www.no5.org.uk

Office: 101 Oxford Road, Reading RG1 7UD

Referral: No5's services are open-access self referral and can be made by young people, parents or professionals using the online form - <https://no5.org.uk/referrals/>

PACT

PACT (Parents and Children Together) aims to support hundreds of troubled families every year through inspirational and award-winning community services across London and the Thames Valley. Community projects include Bounce Back 4 Kids, for young victims of domestic abuse and their families, and Alana House, an innovative women's community project supporting vulnerable women with multiple and complex needs. PACT also provides 'Outstanding' (Ofsted 2017) adoption services and specialist therapeutic support services.



Contact details:

Phone: 0300 456 4800

Email: info@pactcharity.org

Website: pactcharity.org

Office: 7 Southern Court, South Street, Reading RG1 4QS

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Parenting Special Children

Parenting Special Children provides specialist support to Berkshire families who have children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including early life trauma. They do this through a helpline, specialist courses and workshops including sleep, trauma and attachment, and ADHD, training for professionals, children and young people's groups, support groups and family events



Contact details:

Phone: 01189 863532

Email: admin@parentingspecialchildren.co.uk

Website: www.parentingspecialchildren.co.uk

Office: 11 Glebe Road, Reading RG2 7AG

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors or other professionals, or by the families themselves.

Reading Mencap

Reading Mencap provides information, advice and citizen advocacy to support children and adults with learning disabilities and their families to help them overcome barriers, and lead a full and active life. Our outreach, case-working service of 4 Family Advisers provides support with a wide variety of issues, including social care, charging for care, health, housing, benefits, preparing for adulthood, debt, hate crime, diagnosis and legal matters, and any issues which act as a barrier to good health and wellbeing. We offer a Day Activity Service at our building in Alexandra Road, and four evening and daytime clubs. We are also a Partner in the Reading and West Berks Carer's Partnership with Age UK Berkshire, Age UK Reading and Communicare. We have our own in-house legal officer.



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 966 2518

Email: office@readingmencap.org.uk

Website: readingmencap.org.uk

Office: 21 Alexandra Road, Reading RG1 5PE

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Reading Students' Union Advice Service

The Reading Students' Union (RUSU) Advice Service offers free, confidential, independent and non-judgmental advice, with the aim of equipping students with the relevant information and support to empower them to make informed decisions. They are able to support any person who is enrolled onto a course at the University of Reading, including Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught, Postgraduate Research, home and international students. They advise on a range of issues relating to students, including advice with academic issues; issues in private rented accommodation, university and private halls; student funding; welfare benefits; debt. They are also able to signpost students to other relevant services within the University.



Contact Details:

Phone: 0118 378 4100

Email: advice@rusu.co.uk

Website: www.readingsu.co.uk/advice

Website contact form: www.readingsu.co.uk/getadvice

Referral: By the individual in the first instance. We would be happy to speak to Councillors about the support we are able to provide, but would encourage individuals to get in contact with us directly.

Reading Voluntary Action (RVA)

RVA promotes strength within Reading's voluntary and community sector by providing information, access to resources, volunteer recruitment and training to people who work in or with charities, community groups and voluntary organisations. They support voluntary sector representation on cross-sector partnership initiatives in Reading.

RVA's Social Prescribing Service links people aged 16 and over to the activities and support offered by Reading's voluntary and community groups, empowering people to improve their health and wellbeing. Their Social Prescribing Link Workers help people to identify what matters to them, and how to connect with the community activities that might make a difference. RVA's Social Prescribing team works with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) across Reading and accepts referrals from GPs.

The Community Wellness Outreach (CWO) project runs in Reading until the end of June 2025. The project is funded by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to pilot outreach activities which reduce health inequalities for our most vulnerable communities. The programme is open to all, but people at risk of developing cardiovascular conditions are a priority. CWO is a partnership between RVA, RBC and Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust's Patient Experience Engagement Team, MEET PEET. The partners are running health and wellbeing outreach hubs in community settings across Reading, providing NHS Health Checks and holistic support to enable people to take action to improve their health. Groups can find out more about getting involved at <https://rva.org.uk/community-wellness-outreach/> . Health checks can be booked at <https://rva.org.uk/free-nhs-health-checks/> .



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 937 2273

Email: info@rva.org.uk

Website: rva.org.uk

Office: 3rd Floor, Central Library, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BQ

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

Reading Welfare Rights

Reading Welfare Rights advocates for Reading's most vulnerable citizens, many of whom experience a debilitating mixture of physical and mental health conditions. We support individuals who are entitled to state aid, but who, due to the complex nature of the benefits system, cannot access the benefits they are due without our intervention.

Our advocacy services go well beyond simply providing "advice." At every stage of the Benefits process, we act as the client's representative, including often being their legal appointee, speaking on their behalf to government agencies. We frequently represent our clients at Tribunals, arguing cases before a judge, as a barrister defends their clients in court.

By helping to relieve poverty, we help to reduce sickness and distress and support people to live more independently and sustainably. In the 2020-21 reporting period, we supported over 700 individuals and secured over £500,000 in benefits and backdated monies for our clients.



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 955 1070

Email: advisor@readingspecialist.co.uk

Website: www.readingspecialist.co.uk

Twitter: @RightsReading

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/readingwelfare/>

Office: By Appointment Only: Drop-in Service unavailable.

135 Cardiff Road, Reading RG1 8JF

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, other agencies or the individual themselves.

Refugee Support Group (Reading)

Refugee Support Group (Reading) helps refugees rebuild their lives in Berkshire. We are committed to reducing poverty, suffering and social isolation for families and individuals who have escaped war, violence and persecution.

Refugee Support Group (Reading) provides OISC Level 3 casework legal advice and support through booked appointments. We run weekly Drop-Ins. We provide English classes, Befriending, Job support, Mental Health support, a children's homework club, a refugee football team, and integration and social activities. We also advocate for asylum seekers in contingency accommodation - hotels and houses.



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 950 5356

Email: info@rrsg.org.uk

Website: www.refugeesupportgroup.org.uk

Office: First Floor, RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, Council Officers, other charities or the individual themselves.

The Mustard Tree

The Mustard Tree identifies and addresses unmet needs in our communities, developing projects that reduce health and social inequalities, increase community engagement, and give a voice to the unheard. It operates the following projects:

- Starting Point (SP) – Providing mentoring and creating opportunities for young people aged 11-25 who face disadvantage. Supporting young people to engage and thrive within

education, employment and training.

- Rahab (R) - Identifying, supporting and empowering anyone affected by sexual exploitation. It runs a night outreach for sex workers in the Oxford Road/Western Elms area and provides further daytime support.
- Engage (E) - Reducing isolation and loneliness by developing positive relationships and networks in our community. This includes providing regular wellbeing support from a befriender



Contact details:

Phone: 0118 956 7000

Email: startingpoint@themustardtree.org;

rahab@themustardtree.org;

engage@themustardtree.org

Website: themustardtree.org

Office: 4 Sackville Street, Reading RG1 1NT

Referral: Referral can be by Councillors, or the individual themselves.

YMCA Reading

YMCA Reading's primary service is to provide quality supported accommodation to 40 of Reading's most vulnerable 16-25 year olds who would otherwise be homeless. Whilst with us the young people are supported in all aspects of their daily lives, from managing budgets; applying for relevant welfare benefits; signposting to relevant external agencies to assist with mental health, employment, education, training and supporting the young people to move on into social or private rented accommodation.



Contact Details:

Phone: 0118 957 5746

Email: info@ymcareading.org

Website: www.ymcareading.org

Office: 34 Parkside Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2DD

Referral: All referrals come via Reading Borough Council's Housing Advice Team



For further information, please visit our website or contact us by:

telephone 07834 363144

email richard.k.harrison@ntlworld.com

website www.readingadvicenetwork.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1165798

