

# Citizens Advice Reading

Business plan 2018-2021



**citizens  
advice**

**Reading**

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# 1. Introduction

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The purpose of this Business Plan is to give strategic direction to the work of Citizens Advice Reading over the three years from 2018 - 2021. It is updated annually and reflects:

- the key challenges we face over this period
- Reading's community profile
- our evidence on client need
- the priorities of Reading Borough Council (RBC), the national Citizens Advice Service (NCA) and other strategic partners
- consultation with our staff and volunteers

It is supported by a Priority Actions Plan for 2018 - 2019 which sets out in more detail the activities through which we will meet our statutory, contractual and membership obligations, and pursue our strategic priorities over the coming year.

## 1.1 Our aims

Citizens Advice Reading is a member of the National Citizens Advice (NCA) service and is committed to its twin aims:

- To provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

## 1.2 Our principles

The service provides free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to everyone regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or faith, or nationality. It recognises the positive value of diversity, promotes equality, and challenges discrimination.

## 1.3 Our values

We are problem-solving, people-focused and principle-centered:

We are an organisation that helps people resolve their problems through the provision of timely advice, advocacy, referral and signposting

We offer tailored advice to each client; whatever their problems we focus on our clients as individuals

We help people get fair treatment for their immediate problems and work for lasting change through research and campaigns.

## 2. Our vision for 2018 - 2021

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We overcame a number of major challenges last year - achieving an 'Excellent' performance assessment against the requirements of the new Membership Agreement, [securing a new contract, with our two partners, with Reading Borough Council], and implementing the new casework recording system - but we know that new challenges will emerge as these three years progress. Nevertheless our vision is that over this period we will rise to these challenges and, working in partnership with other local advice agencies, Citizens Advice Reading will:

- sustain our excellent performance
- play a pivotal role in the provision of increasingly integrated, accessible, high quality advice, advocacy and information services to meet the needs of our communities;
- be an agent for social change through our contribution to research and campaigns.

## 3. Strategic priorities

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The foundation for everything else in our Business Plan, and our top priority, is that we continue to meet all our statutory, contractual and membership obligations. Our performance against these will be monitored regularly by the Senior Management Team, and by the Trustee Board through our Risk Management Register. Beyond that, over the next three years we will pursue four strategic priorities. These are to:

1. Remain financially secure
2. Fundamentally review our services, against the changing context for their delivery, to maximise their range, impact, cost-effectiveness and resilience
3. Further enhance our skills at working in partnership
4. Strengthen our reputation

## 3.1 Financial security

We will remain financially secure by:

- setting and implementing sensible budgets for each year of this Plan
- implementing our income generation strategy
- making increasingly cost-effective use of our resources - our income, people, offices and equipment
- expanding the market for our training services and becoming the key training organisation for the voluntary advice and information sector in Reading
- systematically applying our business development model to identify, secure, manage and wherever possible extend our contracts, actively managing our relationships with our funders

## 3.2 Our services

We will continue the fundamental review of our services that we began in 2017-18, looking at the many different ways in which the context for their delivery is changing, and aiming to maximise their future range, impact, cost-effectiveness and resilience. That is likely to mean paying particular attention to:

- how we select, train, develop, lead, manage, and, in particular, support and encourage our staff and volunteers
- making our services more efficient, wherever possible dealing with our clients' problems at the first point of contact
- implementing our new IT strategy to make service delivery from any location as easy and cost-effective as possible
- expanding our use of email and webchat with clients
- making our services more accessible to disadvantaged and hard to reach groups, and
- using the feedback from our clients about the quality and outcomes of our services to improve their experience

## 3.3 Working in partnership

We will further enhance our skills at working in partnership by:

- successfully delivering support for individuals to maximise their daily income with Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit and CommuniCare
- successfully delivering support to refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants with the British Red Cross and Sanctuary Hosting

- winning and delivering other partnership contracts
- playing a key role in the Reading Advice Network
- building a 'review, learn and apply' process into all our partnership work

### 3.4 Our reputation

We will strengthen our reputation by:

- publicising our 'excellent' rating in our Autumn 2017 Leadership Self Assessment
- developing and implementing a public and social media strategy - which promotes our services, publicises our partnerships, spreads our expertise, and brands our work effectively for the public, our clients and potential funders
- researching local problems and mounting campaigns to tackle them

## 4. Measuring success

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If this Plan succeeds, by 2021 we will be financially strong, valued across Reading by our clients, our funders and the public for the range and impact of our services, and valued by partner organisations for the way we work with them.

We will measure success in two ways:

- by the extent to which we have taken the actions set out above
- by a series of specific outcome measures which assess changes in:
  - our income
  - the level of our reserves
  - the diversity of our funding
  - the views of staff and volunteers about our organisation and our services
  - the numbers of clients we help, face-to-face, on the phone and online
  - the views of clients about the quality of our services and the outcomes these achieve
  - the match between our client profile and the community profile
  - the quality of our leadership
  - the scale and quality of the joint services we provide with our partners

## 5. Conclusion

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We believe that this Business Plan will enable us to deal successfully with the challenges we face over the next three years. The fundamental review of our services, once complete, will set the framework for future Business Plans.

# Appendix A



# 6. Appendix A - The context of the plan

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**(based on the latest census)**

## 6.1 An introduction to Reading

Reading covers 40,000 hectares and is mainly urban in character, with the river Thames and river Kennet flowing through the area. It has excellent public transport links to London and the major airports, which have contributed to attracting many international companies. Despite evident regional prosperity, Reading contains some significant areas of deprivation. This report sets out key aspects of Reading's community profile and cross-references against that of Citizens Advice Reading's clients. The report then progresses to reflect on economic and social observations for Reading, and relate trends to the advice needs analysis for the organisation.

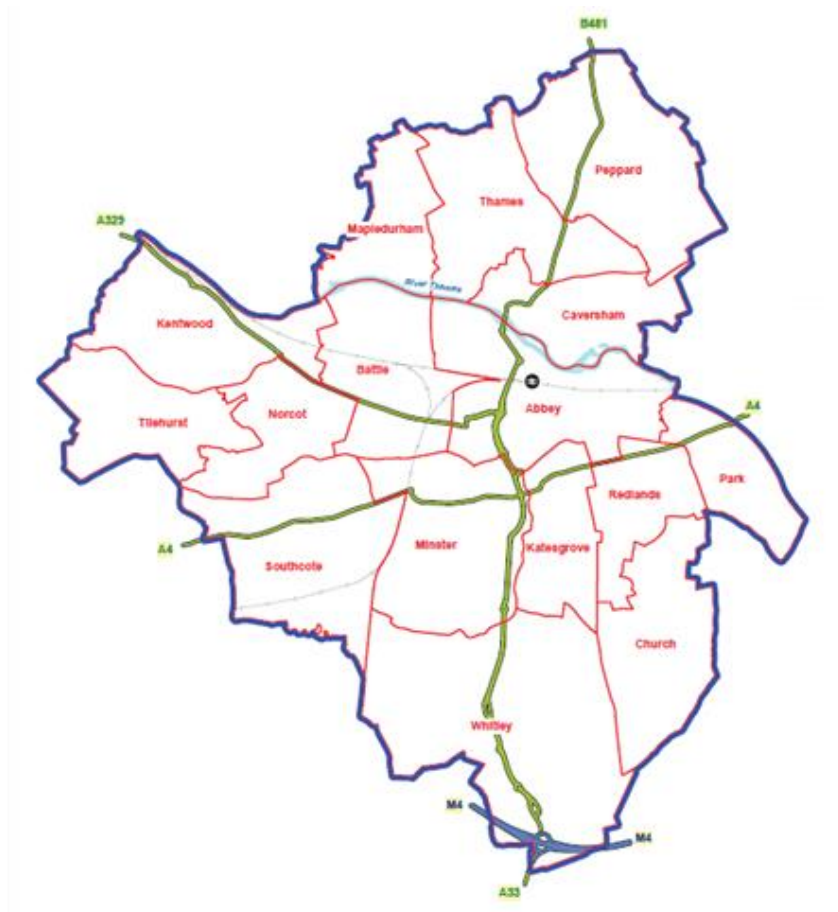
### Population

The population of Reading as at 2011 was estimated at 155,800 (ONS); this is approximately 18% of the Berkshire population (861,870).<sup>1</sup>

This is a 9% increase on the 2001 census figure and a 2% bigger increase than the one between 1991 and 2001 when there was a 7.1% increase in population. With the exception of Slough, it is the area with highest population density in the county. Slough's population density is 43.1% and Reading's population density is 35.8%.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/asv2htm.aspx>



## Gender

The clients of Citizens Advice Reading consist of 4% more female than male clients, despite a slightly higher male population than female in Reading overall.

### Reading population by gender 2011

Gender	Reading	Our clients
Female	49.9%	52%
Male	50.1%	48%

## Age

Most of our clients are in the age 25-49 age group and we continue to underrepresent in the 17-24 age group; however, our national organisation reports this as being a common trend. Current branding shows that the perception of Citizens Advice is that it is old fashioned and younger people may prefer more modern ways of accessing advice. Work is being done nationally to look at improving our telephone access to clients and developing web access. If we want to change our client age profile then we may have to review our current access arrangements which focus on face to face

advice. Recent market research by Citizens Advice shows that younger people prefer to access advice through the internet, social media and via the telephone.

Age band <sup>2</sup>	Reading	Our clients
17-24	24.5%	11%
25-49	30.9%	58%
50-64	13.8%	19%
Over 65	11.4%	11%

## Disability

According to census figures 12.3% of residents describe themselves as long-term sick or disabled. Whereas 25% of our clients describe themselves as long term sick or disabled the Citizens Advice Reading profile is similar, though with a slightly higher % of clients with a disability (see below).

### Reading population by physical disability 2011

	Reading		Our clients	
Disabled	20,493	13.5%	785	15.7%
Not disabled	131,307	86.5%	4215	84%
Total	151,800	100%	5000	100%

## Ethnicity

Reading's population has increased in ethnic diversity. 25.3% of the population is now currently non-white, a 12.1% increase since 2001. Within the White population "other white" has increased from 4.2% to 7.9%. The Black and Minority Ethnic group make up over 13% of the total population, compared to an England and Wales average of 8.7%.

We are the second most ethnically diverse town in the South East, with almost 25% of the population from established black and minority ethnic communities and many more recent arrivals from EU accession countries and elsewhere. 74.8% of Reading's population are White British, and the largest BME groups are:

- Pakistani 4.5%

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS102EW/view/1946157285?cols=measures>

- Mixed Ethnicity 2.37% (2.2%)
- Black Caribbean 2.1% (1.1%)
- Indian 4.2%
- Black African 3.9%

In the last 7 years there have been significant increases in migration by European nationals for economic reasons. In particular Portuguese EEA nationals and dependents, and since 2004 A8 EEA nationals (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) especially Polish people. Previous A2 nationals (Bulgarian and Romanian) now have the same rights as all EEA national. Citizens Advice Reading is well used by European nationals. Another group of people who are significant users of our services is the African population which has risen by 4% since the last census. There has also been a significant influx of Nepalese following the changes to immigration law for Ghurkas, but this is not yet reflected in the census figures.

The proportion of the population classified as white was 74.75%, which is very low by national standards, with Reading ranking in the bottom 20% of districts. By comparison, the Berkshire average was 80.04% and the national figure was 85.97%.

For all other ethnic groups, Reading ranks in the top 20% of districts. Detailed comparisons are shown in the table on the following page. Only 82% of the Reading population identifies itself as wholly British whereas 91.6% of the population nationally considers itself wholly British. 8.8% of householders have no people where English is a main language, which is double that nationally.

### **Ethnic Group – Percentages based on the 2011 Census**

	<b>Reading <sup>3</sup> Authority</b>	<b>South East <sup>4</sup> Region</b>	<b>England <sup>5</sup> Country</b>	<b>Citizens Advice Reading</b>
<b>All usual residents – in units</b>	<b>155,698</b>	<b>8,634,750</b>	<b>53,012,456</b>	
<b>White</b>	<b>74.8%</b>	<b>90.7%</b>	<b>85.4%</b>	<b>67%</b>
White: English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	65.3%	85.2%	79.8%	53%
White: Irish	1.5%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0%

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201EW/view/1946157285?cols=measures>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201EW/view/2013265928?cols=measures>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201EW/view/2092957699?cols=measures>

	Reading <sup>3</sup> Authority	South East <sup>4</sup> Region	England <sup>5</sup> Country	Citizens Advice Reading
White: Other White	7.9%	4.4%	4.6%	13%

### Ethnic Group – Percentages based on the 2011 Census

	Reading <sup>6</sup> Authority	South East <sup>7</sup> Region	England <sup>8</sup> Country	Citizens Advice Reading
<b>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	1.7%	0.5%	0.8%	2%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	1%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	0.9%	0.7%	0.6%	1%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	1%
<b>Asian/Asian British</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Asian/Asian British: Indian	4.2%	1.8%	2.6%	3%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	4.5%	1.1%	2.1%	5%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.4%	0.3%	0.8%	1%
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	1.0%	0.6%	0.7%	1%
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	3.5%	1.4%	1.5%	2%
<b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	3.9%	1.0%	1.8%	4%

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201EW/view/1946157285?cols=measures>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201EW/view/2013265928?cols=measures>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201EW/view/2092957699?cols=measures>

	Reading <sup>6</sup> Authority	South East <sup>7</sup> Region	England <sup>8</sup> Country	Citizens Advice Reading
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	2.1%	0.4%	1.1%	9%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	0.7%	0.2%	0.5%	1%
<b>Other ethnic group</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Other ethnic group: Arab	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	-
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%	-

## Country of Birth

The changing nature of diversity in Reading is further described in the change in the top ten countries of birth of Reading residents (outside Great Britain). Poland moves into the top three having been outside the rankings in 2001. Zimbabwe, Ghana, Hong Kong and Nigeria move into the top ten whilst Barbados, Kenya, France, Italy and USA move out having been in the top ten in 2001.

### Top 10 countries of birth of Reading residents (outside Great Britain)

	Placing in 2001	Number of people 2011	% of Reading population 2011
India	3	4670	3
Poland	-	3919	2.5
Pakistan	2	3160	2.0
Republic of Ireland	1	1732	1.1
Germany	4	1042	0.7
Zimbabwe	-	827	0.5
South Africa	6	818	0.5
Ghana	-	816	0.5
Hong Kong	-	785	0.5
Nigeria	-	755	0.5

## Religion

Following Christian and 'no religion', the largest religious grouping in Reading is Muslim at 7.1%. This is a 3.1% increase on 2001. The proportion identifying as Christian has declined by 12% since 2011 with "no religion" increasing by 7.5%. Buddhism and Hinduism also show an increase since 2001. The figures in the table below show that users of Citizens Advice Reading reflect roughly the Reading population except Christian although it should be noted that there is a high percentage of religion not stated.

	Reading 2001 %	Reading 2011 %	England 2011 %	Citizens Advice Reading 2013 %
Christian	62.6	50	59.4	21.3
Buddhist	0.5	1.2	0.5	1.1
Hindu	1.0	3.6	1.5	1.7
Jewish	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.1
Muslim	4.0	7.1	5.0	6.3
Sikh	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.4
Other religions	0.4	0.5	0.4	2.2
No religion	22.0	29.5	24.7	11.2
Religion not stated	8.7	7.3	7.2	55.5

Reading therefore has an increasingly diverse population and Citizens Advice Reading is used heavily by the BME population and new immigrant population from the EU. This community make complex demands on the service ranging from immigration services to support with complex benefits issues. We are also seeing increasing numbers of employment issues such as non- payment of wages. This means that we are dealing with many different languages and cultures. Translation services are expensive and we currently have access to only one translated interview per week.

## Social deprivation

Reading has some pockets of extremely deprived and disadvantaged communities; when considering a range of social factors (Income, Employment, Health deprivation and disability, Education, Skills and training, Barriers to housing and services, Living environment and Crime) eight communities in Reading fall into the 20% most deprived areas in England.

An increase in the cost of living, especially food and fuel has had a major impact on already deprived communities with average incomes rising by only 1.5%. Changes to the welfare system including bedroom tax and the benefits cap have had an impact on income as reductions are made from Housing benefit in an area where rents are high and social housing is scarce. Many clients are also paying Council Tax for the first time as the highest amount of Council Tax Support that RBC offers is 90%.

Areas where there are significant levels of deprivation are:

- Amersham Road Estate in Caversham, and Coley Park in Reading fall within the 10% most deprived areas for income deprivation in England.
- Coley Park also falls into the top 20% most deprived in England for employment deprivation, and is within the top 10% in England for income deprivation affecting children.
- Parts of Church and Abbey wards in Reading are in the top 5% most deprived in England in terms of education, skills and training

Reading has significant levels of child poverty with 24% of all children in Reading defined by Reading Borough Council as living in poverty in 2014. Child poverty is currently defined as the number of a community's population under 16 who are living in families in receipt of Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, or in families whose equivalent income is below 60% of the median before housing costs. (There are currently government plans to change this). Reading is ranked as the 8th highest local authority for children living in poverty in the South East.

Further indicators of poverty are that 19% of all children of statutory school age are claiming free school meals which has increased by 3% since December 2012 and nearly one third of schoolchildren are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for disadvantaged pupils) which is the highest in Berkshire, where the average was 20 per cent.

The proportion of lone parent households was 10.78% in 2011, which is high by national standards, with Reading ranking in the top 40% of districts. By comparison, the Berkshire average was 9.36% and the national figure was 10.65%.

9.8% of households in Reading are living in fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is linked with excess winter deaths. Excess winter deaths in Reading are currently higher than the national average. There is a clear social gradient where those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more at risk of fuel poverty. Deaths in Reading increased by around 35% during the winter months in 2011 compared to the other seasons of the year. Excess winter deaths in Reading follow a similar pattern over time to those nationally and there has been an increase over the past three years.



## Unemployment and other non-working benefit claimants

### Working-age client group - key benefit claimants (May 2013)

	Reading (numbers)	Reading (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	11,920	11.1	10.1	13.9
<b>By statistical group</b>				
Job seekers	3,050	2.8	2.2	3.5
ESA and incapacity benefits	4,960	4.6	4.4	6.2
Lone parents	1,560	1.5	1.0	1.3
Carers	900	0.8	1.0	1.3
Others on income related benefits	330	0.3	0.3	0.4
Disabled	940	0.9	1.0	1.2
Bereaved	170	0.2	0.2	0.2
Key out-of-work benefits	9,910	9.2	7.8	11.2

Source: DWP benefit claimants - working age client group

The table above shows that in May 2013 9.2% of the population were claiming key out of work benefits which is higher than that for the South East which is 7.8%. It also shows that the number of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants, out of work disability benefit claimants, and lone parents is higher than the average for the South East.

Since June 2013 the numbers of JSA claimants has fallen by 1% whilst unemployment levels have stayed fairly consistent at 6.2% of the population. Figures from Berkshire Community foundation show however that the numbers claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) doubled between 2011 and 2013 which may account for the fall in JSA claimants.

The enquiry area where advice is most sought currently is on Benefits accounting for almost 15% of advice work and the areas where most advice is sought is for help with JSA, ESA, Tax credits and Housing Benefits. We expect demand for our support in this area to increase as welfare reform changes continue to affect our clients. Currently we are seeing numbers creeping up regarding benefit reconsiderations and sanctions. We also expect to see an increase in support for disabled claimants as the shift from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is introduced.

## Labour Supply

### Employment and unemployment (Oct 2012-Sep 2013)

	Reading (numbers)	Reading (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
<b>All people 16-64</b>				
Economically active	90,600	78.4	79.9	77.4
In employment	86,000	74.3	74.8	71.2
Employees	75,700	66.0	63.5	61.1
Self employed	9,600	7.8	10.9	9.5
Unemployed	5,700	6.2	6.2	7.7

The numbers in employment in Reading has remained fairly static over the last 6 years at around 74% of the population. The nature of work is however changing and there has been an increase in the numbers of people working part time and in self-employment since the last census. Consequently there has been a drop in the numbers of those working full time. We are also seeing an increasing number of clients who are employed on zero hours contracts. So whilst they are technically employed they work erratic hours. This means frequent changes to JSA and tax credits and can often lead to periods with no income.

Job security has changed as employees only have the right to claim unfair dismissal after two years of employment and there are now charges to make a claim through an Employment Tribunal. This has led to employers being more bullish in their approach to dismissing employees. Employees are also less keen to cause disruption in fear of losing employment.

The proportion of the working age population who are in long-term unemployment in Reading is very high, with the district ranking in the top 20% of districts nationally. In Reading, 31.42% of people who are unemployed have been claiming job seekers allowance for at least 12 months, compared with 27.04% in Berkshire and 29.97% nationally.

## Housing

The proportion of households that were owner occupied within Reading was 54.84% in 2011. This places Reading in the bottom 20% of districts nationally. By comparison,

the Berkshire figure was 65.74, the South East figure was 67.63, and the national figure was 63.57%.

The proportion of households that were rented within Reading was 42.37% in 2011. This places Reading in the top 20% of districts nationally. By comparison, the Berkshire figure was 31.78, the South East figure was 29.98, and the national figure was 34.32%. The cost of private rented housing in Reading is high and social housing is in short supply.

The proportion of total housing stock declared as non-decent in Reading was 3.53%. This places Reading in the middle 20% of districts nationally. By comparison, the Berkshire figure was 2.61, the South East figure was 3.27 and the national average was 4.18%.

Reading therefore has a higher than the national average of private tenants with a housing stock that is in poor condition as there is a high proportion of Victorian Housing. Rents are high and Housing Benefit often doesn't cover all rent. Landlords are also unwilling to accept tenants who are in receipt of housing benefit and/or who have deposits from Reading Borough Council's Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

## **Sources of advice in Reading**

The town is well-served by several advice and support agencies and many solicitor's practices. There is a Magistrates and Crown court, a County Court which also takes some High Court cases, an employment Tribunal office and a Social Security Appeals Tribunal office, which may close in two years and move to Oxford. As well as statutory advice provision, there is also a healthy voluntary provision covering a range of client bases.

The Reading Advice Network (formed following a Big Lottery funded project) is looking at exploring new and innovative ways that the various local volunteer agencies can work together to enhance the provision of advice to meet the needs of the Reading Community.

## **Statutory advice provision**

The Insolvency service and a public help point for HMRC are based in Reading.

The two NHS hospitals in Reading (Royal Berkshire and the Prospect Park Mental Health Hospital) have fully operational Patient Advisory Liaison services and a new Mental Health Advocacy scheme is attached to Prospect Park.

There is a Job Centre and a home visiting service from the Pension service; our MacMillan Benefits Project is given “Alternative Office Status” which allows the Advisers to take applications for Pension Credit etc. at first contact.

Reading Borough Council has Debt Advice Workers (but for Council Tenants only) as well as a Housing Support Service that can assist and advocate for vulnerable tenants; these both include home visiting services.

## **Voluntary advice provision**

- Citizens Advice – Reading (includes outreaches in Milman Road Health Centre, Royal Berkshire Hospital and Dee Park) and in Wokingham, Henley, Newbury, Maidenhead, Slough, and Bracknell
- CommuniCare (Reading East)
- Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit
- Law Centres Federation
- Youth Access – network of young people’s advice and counselling services
- DIAL UK – network of local disability advice organisations
- Frontline Debt Advice project – central Reading
- Christians Against Poverty – West Reading , including home visiting service

## **Demand for advice**

The demand for Advice from clients has increased significantly over the last 5 years as has the complexity of the presented problems. Until 2016 we had to turn on average 210 clients per month away because of a lack of advisory capacity but the introduction of new initial assessment processes in 2016 has resulted in a substantial reduction to that number. Other advice organisations in Reading report that they have also seen a surge in demand and the provision of food parcels has increased by 300%.

Welfare reforms, reducing public sector expenditure and the increase in the cost of living; in particular food and utility costs continue to create rising levels of hardship for many of our clients. The Local Government Association estimates that as a result of welfare reforms, households claiming benefit in Reading will see their income drop by £1,665 a year. Many of those affected are people who are in work but have incomes that cannot meet the rising costs of living. 1 in 5 children are deemed to be living in poverty in Reading.

Universal Credit was introduced in Reading at the end of 2017 and is expected to add to the demands on the service.

## In summary

- Reading's population continues to increase.
- The ethnic diversity of the population is also increasing.
- Despite Reading being a prosperous and wealthy town there are high levels of deprivation with 24% of children living in poverty. Rates of in work poverty are increasing.
- JSA claims are decreasing but claims for ESA are increasing.
- Changes to welfare reform will mean an average drop in income of £1,655 per year
- Whilst employment levels in Reading are good, the numbers of long term unemployed put Reading in the top 20% of districts nationally and have increased since the 2001 census.
- There is a shortage of social housing and private rental properties charge high rents as there is a high demand for properties.

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Reading LINK Summary Report: Community Engagement Survey Analysis, September 2010

## 6.2 Our current services

We provide a full generalist service across all the main enquiry areas which include:

- Debt / money advice
- Benefits and Tax Credits
- Employment
- Housing
- Immigration

Our generalist advisers achieve a high level of competence and are supported by an up to date and comprehensive information system.

We provide externally accredited specialist level advice in the following enquiry areas:

- Debt / money advice / debt relief orders
- Benefits
- Immigration (OISC Level 2)

and have developed specialisms in employment and housing debt advice.

We operate a face to face and telephone initial assessment to enable us to assess the most appropriate way of assisting clients. Clients may be signposted or referred , to an appropriate organisation, given assisted information or given an appointment with our advice service. Clients may leave written enquiries. Services continue to be delivered primarily from our premises at Minster Street, but we also have a range of outreach services.

In partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support we provide outreach services in the Berkshire Cancer Centre at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the Wexham Park Hospital to deliver a Benefits Advice Service to cancer patients and their carers who live or receive their treatment in Berkshire. We also provide outreach advice one day a week to patients at the Milman Road Health Centre. In addition to this we have advice support services at Alana House a centre for women who are ex-offenders or at risk of offending and also at Dee Park for the residents of Catalyst Housing Association.

We provide a Reading County Court desk service in conjunction with Citizens Advice Wokingham, and our life coaching service continues to offer a holistic service to those seeking to make life changes and achieve a healthier lifestyle.

A new court desk service will be established at Reading magistrates' court (covering 3 half day sessions) in the summer of 2018.

Our 2017 Client Satisfaction Survey found that 92% of respondents were happy overall with the service they had received. Responses to more detailed questions found that:

- 91% said their expectations had been met or exceeded
- 89% were satisfied with the advice they were given
- 96% were satisfied with the ease of access
- 93% were happy with our opening times
- 95% would use Citizens Advice Reading again
- 93% would recommend the service to others.

The data on the following page gives details of the services provided during the 12 months from 1st April 2017.

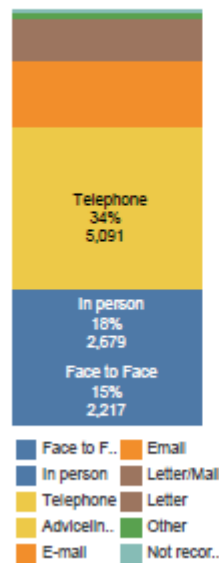
### Summary

Clients	5,270
Quick client contacts	2,520
Issues	18,151
Activities	21,092
Cases	5,787

### Outcomes

Income gain	£1,596,755
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£19,828
Debts written off	£192,599
Repayments rescheduled	£2,970

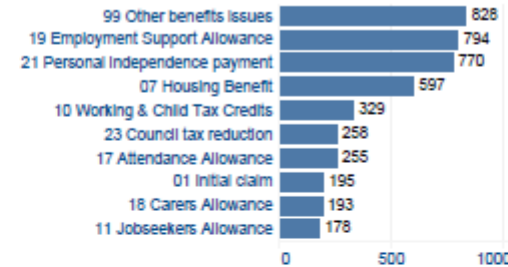
### Channel (client & third party)



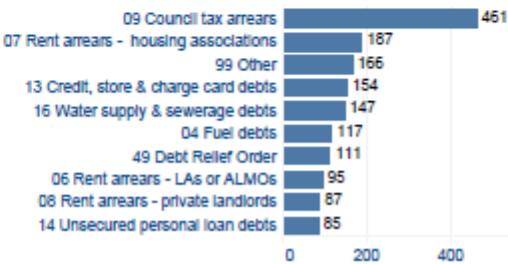
### Issues

Issue	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	5,182
Benefits Universal Credit	417
Consumer goods & services	488
Debt	2,521
Discrimination	131
Education	67
Employment	1,823
Financial services & capability	633
Health & community care	304
Housing	1,753
Immigration & asylum	1,365
Legal	809
Other	603
Relationships & family	1,069
Tax	194
Travel & transport	239
Utilities & communications	563
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18,151</b>

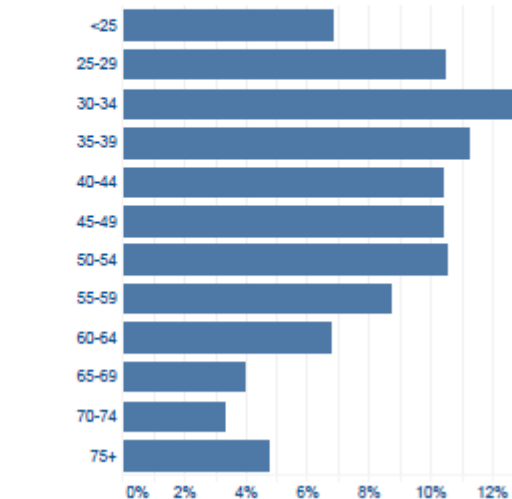
### Top benefit issues



### Top debt issues



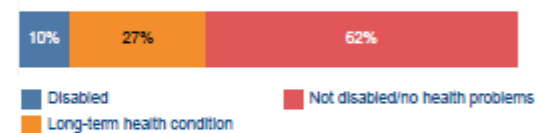
### Age



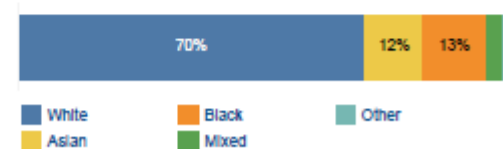
### Gender



### Disability / Long-term health



### Ethnicity





## 6.3 Our current staffing (as at 1 April 2018)

Full and Part-Time staff	Volunteers
<b>Total Paid Staff 20</b> (13 FTE)	<b>Total Volunteers 93</b>
	32 advisers/trainee advisers
	27 gateway assessors
	22 reception/admin
	3 life coaches
	10 trustees)

### Our current staff roles

The senior management team (SMT) comprises:

- Chief Executive
- Advice Services Manager
- HR and Training Manager
- Finance, Facilities and Systems Manager
- Office Manager
- Supervisor (Service development)
- Energy and Financial Capability Coordinator
- Income Generation and Relationship Lead
- Project Assessment and Project Development Lead

Note: The latter four are members of SMT because of the strategic impact of their roles.

Our middle management team comprises:

- Supervisor (Service development)
- Senior Supervisor Money
- Advice Session Supervisors
- Supervisor/caseworker Macmillan Benefits Service
- Training Supervisor

Our other paid staff are:

- Specialist Caseworkers
- Outreach general caseworker

Our current volunteer roles are:

- Administrators

- Advice Support
- Advice Session Supervisors
- Generalist Advisers
- Gateway Supervisors
- Gateway Assessors
- Life Coaches
- Reception Team Workers
- Specialist Advisers (debt; welfare benefits; housing; immigration; employment)
- Specialist Support Workers (marketing; research; fundraising; telesales)

## 6.4 The way we operate

Citizens Advice Reading utilises an information system, Casebook, for the recording and reporting of advice work. This is a dynamic computerised database, providing a range of reports to support performance management and monitoring information. The effective implementation of the new system and our full use of it will be vital to underpin future service developments, and to maximise our ability to secure support and funding for our work.

Our financial reporting and accounting system (QuickBooks) enables us to analyse and report our financial situation and informs our decisions about all projects and services offered by Citizens Advice Reading.

Our robust digital telecommunications system enables us to have greater control of our incoming calls, and provides headsets for our telephone advice operators and DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications) handsets for our advisers.

We continue to invest in the training and development of our staff and volunteers so that a pool of well-trained people is available to take up the opportunities that become available. We are extending our use of volunteers, in a diverse range of roles, to support our advice service and commissioned contracts.

We will maintain our 2016 accreditation by Investors in People.

The main needs of our staff and volunteers are to:

- be able to access high quality, timely and relevant training
- be supported by effective supervision, coaching, mentoring and personal development.

We provide:

- training for our administrative, advice support and reception teams
- a basic training programme for all new advisers that equips them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver quality advice. This training results in a certificate of general advice, which is equivalent to an NVQ 3-4.

- coaching recognised by the Association for Coaching.

Training and professional development is ongoing and we ask advisers to take five full days training in their first year of advising (after their basic training) and four days a year thereafter. The HR and Training Manager draws on courses that are available from Citizens Advice, Money Advice Trust, NHAS and other organisations. Citizens Advice Reading asks workers to attend training sessions held regularly every month. These are based on topics that assist the development of advisers and organisation capabilities in those areas highlighted by the business and development plans, and respond to the demands of operational advice delivery.

Our specialist immigration service is audited by the Office of the Immigration Service and our general services undergo regular and extensive Citizens Advice self and central membership audit that covers the full range of activities including governance; policy and processes; quality of advice and management systems.

In September 2017 Citizens Advice Reading was subjected to a full, independent audit on behalf of national Citizens Advice against new and challenging membership standards that were introduced in April 2017. Citizens Advice Reading was awarded an excellent rating – the highest possible.

