

+ READING **VOLUNTARY** ACTION

the difference we make

Annual Report 2008–2009

identifying local needs

developing quality services

providing communication opportunities

working effectively with partners

actively influencing local decision making



NAVCA
Quality
Award



Sarah Morland
Chair of Reading Voluntary Action

Chair's report

The twelve months since our last Annual General Meeting can be summed up in three words: consolidation, change and celebration.

After a period of substantial growth, Reading Voluntary Action focused this year on integrating new projects within the services we traditionally deliver to strengthen the local voluntary and community sector. We recognise that there may be difficult times ahead and I feel confident that Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) can continue to deliver the high quality support and services that organisations and groups have come to expect from us.

As many of you will know, Mike Martin left RVA in July after twenty years as Director. Mike joined at a time of particular difficulty for the organisation. RVA has now become a significant player within Reading's voluntary and community sector, and Mike made an enormous contribution to the reputation and influence that we have locally and regionally. Trustees and staff wish Mike well for his future beyond RVA.

We are pleased to welcome Jeremy Sandell as our new Director. He has hit the ground running and we are already seeing the positive impact of his leadership.

Sadly, one of our long-standing Trustees, Robert Paice, passed away suddenly in April. We miss his insightful questions and quiet humour at meetings. Robert Parker has decided to stand down after many years as our Treasurer. Our grateful thanks to him for the sterling service he has given us. I am grateful to all our trustees, some new, many long serving, for giving their time and expertise to RVA.

The value of external accreditation is growing within the sector. Knowing that we do a good job is one thing; demonstrating this through a rigorous assessment process is something else! We are pleased that the quality of our work has gained external recognition. This report showcases some of the evidence that contributed towards RVA gaining the NAVCA Quality Award.

RVA would not be the strong and successful organisation it is without the contribution of our partners, funders and supporters. Our grateful thanks go to them and we look forward to building on these relationships.

Sarah Morland – Chair of Reading Voluntary Action

about Reading Voluntary Action

Reading Voluntary Action promotes strength within Reading's voluntary sector by providing information, access to resources, volunteer recruitment and training to people who work in or with charities, community groups and voluntary organisations.

Our advice services cover all aspects of running an organisation from start up, through fund raising advice, recruitment, management and governance.

We support voluntary sector representation on cross sector partnership initiatives and opportunities in Reading.

+ READINGVOLUNTARYACTION

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www.rvadirectory.org.uk

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Robert Paice – RVA Board Member October 2001 to April 2009

Robert Paice died suddenly and unexpectedly on 22 April 2009. His energy and enthusiasm for social housing, for voluntary organisations, for volunteering, for community development and for regeneration touched the lives of many people in Reading. For Reading Voluntary Action he was above all a great trustee. He worked hard for the organisation. He consistently asked the right questions and was never afraid to challenge. He had good judgement and he was strategic. On top of those qualities he was simply a nice man. We are a better organisation because of Robert's eight and a half years of service and indebted to him. Our thoughts are with his wife and family.

Director's report

Having only taken over from Mike Martin in July 2009, this Annual Report reflects on work that I can take no credit for! Luckily that makes it easy to acknowledge, without false modesty, that as a snapshot of some of Reading Voluntary Action's activities in the last year it presents just a small cross section of an enormous amount of work undertaken by an incredibly dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

Reading has been my home since I was a child and I'm proud to live in a town that has such a strong and active sense of community spirit. It's that spirit that has brought me to Reading Voluntary Action, and that sense of community that inspires our team. Behind each highlight in this report there lies another story, a view of Reading where, for example, fifty people attending a conference or 1900 people registering to volunteer means more than just numbers. These are local people, representing a wide range of groups in the voluntary and community sector who are often prepared to come home from work, and in their evenings and at weekends do something to improve the lives of the people around them.

So as you read this report I hope you'll get some idea of the difference we at Reading Voluntary Action make to the people who make a difference!

Jeremy Sandell – Reading Voluntary Action Director

Identifying local needs

From direct work with communities to support for local groups and organisations, Reading Voluntary Action has taken a lead in identifying areas of need in Reading and working with partners to develop real solutions to those needs.

Our **Dee Park Community Development Worker** has worked with a wide range of people including Reading FC Football in the Community to bring their Kickz activities to young people in Dee Park. This has given young people an opportunity to take part in sport and build their self-confidence at the same time.

"Yvette's approach will help in the long run because it starts from the basis of getting groups involved in what interests them or meets their needs (e.g. the youth Kickz project with RFC or film nights at the sheltered flats). This approach creates the forum to gradually introduce the subjects we want to hear peoples' views on. She also seems to have tonnes of energy and contacts coming out of her ears which are essential to co-ordinating big multi-agency events like the Fun Day in June (which was a great success) and the Big Clean in September."

Reading Borough Council Regeneration Manager

Working with local groups and NHS Berkshire West, **RVA's Partnership Development Manager** undertook a survey as part of the development of the Battle Health and Wellbeing Centre at the old Battle Hospital site on the Oxford Road. The results from the survey will be used to create opportunities for parts of the centre to be used by voluntary and community groups.

Increasing numbers of local people who receive social care are taking responsibility for buying their own services from money allocated to them. This is a welcome change that will bring new challenges to Voluntary and Community Organisations. An open meeting of the Reading Compact in January 2009, supported

by Reading Voluntary Action, gave a number of key local organisations the opportunity to talk to professionals about these changes and how they would impact on traditional ways of offering services to people with a wide range of personal needs.

So many local organisations rely on the contribution of volunteers, who themselves gain personal satisfaction and experience from their volunteering. Reading Voluntary Action plays a major role in recruiting volunteers for organisations, both through the **Volunteer Centre**, offering a walk-in facility in the town centre and through our **Employee Volunteering Outreach Service** that promotes corporate volunteering and offers the opportunity for employees to meet an advisor at their own work place.

"The volunteers you found have become invaluable members of our team and have helped us during particularly busy periods when we would have undoubtedly struggled without their help."

Jane Barnes – NHS Berkshire West

The Local Involvement Network (LINK) hosted by Reading Voluntary Action has considerably increased opportunities for local people to identify health and social care needs. Early work included research into diabetes care and the need for toenail cutting services for older people.



Developing quality services



Reading Voluntary Action undertakes a significant amount of work supporting voluntary and community organisations to gain the knowledge and skills needed to develop quality services for local people.

Work supporting Reading's Afro-Caribbean and African communities has led to funding for a community worker and significant progress towards the re-opening of Reading's Central Club.

"Being a relatively new and small group, RVA have proved vital in terms of helping us to progress... a brilliant local resource with excellent people."

Mark Bartley – African Caribbean Community Group

Stronger Together organised an information event for organisations working with people that could benefit from opportunities to have a greater say in the services they receive. *The Self Directed Support and Independent Living Event* attracted fifty delegates who were able to explore the new opportunities and challenges this approach will bring.

The **Advice Service** provides advice and support to local trustees as they strive to develop new services for the Reading community. Last year this included Reading Community Learning Centre, Reading Table Tennis Centre, Reading African and Caribbean Community Association, Whitley Muslim Education Trust and new community groups for example Reading Malayalee Association and Association of Reading Tamils. We also helped to improve the working environment for voluntary sector workers by advising thirty-one organisations on their employment practices.

RVA's Funding Advice Service has had another busy year and our e-bulletins and megamails have been full of information on new funding opportunities. But more than this, we have worked with a wide range of individual community groups to increase their ability to fund raise successfully, by providing one to one advice sessions, telephone support and training courses.

During the year our Funding Advice Worker gave direct support to sixty-four local organisations, helping them to identify appropriate funders and building their capacity to develop relevant projects and write attractive bids. A range of successful funding applications resulted, which meant that the groups concerned were able to develop and sustain their services for the residents of Reading.

In October RVA hosted a media workshop called *Young people in a different light*, where as well as hearing from Amy Lewis, the television presenter, twenty-five community group representatives were given practical advice on using the media to engage young people in positive activities.



Providing communication opportunities for the voluntary and community sector

Reading Voluntary Action continues to play a key role in giving representatives of local groups chances to talk to each other, share information and explore opportunities to work together for the benefit of the community.

The **RVA Directory** www.rvadirictory.org.uk is a sophisticated online service that gives local voluntary and community sector groups the potential of their own micro-site, with details of their service, their news and events. The Directory is also regularly updated by the Reading Voluntary Action team with news of our own work and services we offer. In addition to the Directory, our bi-weekly e-bulletin keeps voluntary and community groups informed on the wide-range of strategic and operational information that Reading Voluntary Action receives from national, regional and local sources.

We have been supporting **The Forum**, the meeting place for all of Reading's voluntary and community sector, for over fifteen years and with Reading Voluntary Action's Stronger Together team we can now offer greater opportunities for Forum members. The 2008 Forum AGM gave fifty-seven participants from the local sector the opportunity to decide the priorities that matter to them and develop an action plan to guide the work of Stronger Together.

On behalf of Reading LINK Reading Voluntary Action organised a LINK Stakeholder event in January 2009, attended by forty-three people representing a wide range of organisations from the voluntary sector and statutory partners working in health and social care. The event considered how service provision could be more joined up and easily accessed and provoked lively debate on local Health and Social Care Services.

Reading Voluntary Action also led the **Grow Your Own Group** training. Fifty-two participants took part in the programme that included sessions on starting a group, fundraising, designing and managing a community event and monitoring and evaluation. Feedback from the programme was very positive and we are delighted to be able to repeat the Grow Your Own Group programme in Autumn 2009.

"A challenging and memorable day. Well done"
Grow Your Own Group participant



Working effectively with partners

Reading Voluntary Action has been a significant contributor to **Reading 2020**, the Local Strategic Partnership, since its early days. In 2008 Reading Voluntary Action was a leading partner for the voluntary and community sector in a review of the work and membership of the Partnership Board, bringing together influential leaders of local public, private and voluntary and community sector organisations. Elected by The Forum as one of two voluntary and community sector representatives, RVA's Mike Martin worked with colleagues at a strategic level to highlight the contribution made to Reading by the voluntary and community sector and to promote equality of opportunity and shared understanding between partners. Our new Director Jeremy Sandell was recently elected to continue this important work.

Our Partnership Development Manager has worked behind the scenes on the Project Team that supports the Reading 2020 Partnership. This has enabled the Stronger Together team to work more effectively in its support of The Forum, the Reading Faith Forum, Sakoma and Reading Children's and Voluntary Youth Services (RCVYS). Reading Voluntary Action's practical and ongoing support for these Forums enables many voluntary and community organisations to benefit from the opportunities that local partnerships bring.

Reading Voluntary Action has also worked closely with colleagues in the 2020 Partnership to meet stretch targets as part of a Local Area Agreement between Reading and Central Government. Our involvement has focused on recruiting long-term volunteers for local organisations and providing training and development opportunities for current volunteers. This work has taken place alongside our mainstream work of promoting volunteering opportunities of all types for a wide range of local groups and organisations. Reading Voluntary Action worked with **Reading Borough Council** and **Community Service Volunteers** to give people a taste of volunteering for *Make a Difference Day* last October, including a gardens makeover in Christchurch Meadow and other conservation work around the town.

As the lead organisation for **ChangeUp Reading**, Reading Voluntary Action facilitated a partnership approach to a major new project known as Building for Strength, working closely with Reading Council for Racial Equality, the African Caribbean Community Group, RISC, Sakoma and the Reading Faith Forum. The six organisations have developed a wide-ranging project that looks to service many of the support needs of local community groups. Reading Council for Racial Equality will lead the delivery of this groundbreaking piece of collaborative working.



Actively influencing local decision-making

Reading Voluntary Action's **Stronger Together** team actively manages an extensive and democratic local structure of voluntary and community representation that elects and supports Forum Voices on a wide range of local partnerships and also works closely with colleagues at Reading Children's and Voluntary Youth Services (RCVYS) to support similar engagement with Reading's Children's Trust.

Elections for these partnerships took place at The Forum Annual General Meeting, where over fifty delegates from voluntary and community organisations elected more than twenty Forum Voices (voluntary and community sector representatives) onto local partnerships. Regular training and communication sessions throughout the year have enabled Forum Voices to engage with colleagues and gather information to inform their work, as well as feed back to colleagues on key issues for the voluntary and community sector.

Reading LINK host – Reading Voluntary Action was appointed as host organisation for the Reading LINK from October 2008 providing support and guidance and encouraging participation. The Reading LINK has an independent board and strives to find out what local people like and dislike about local health and social care, investigating and reviewing both good and bad points and bringing these to the attention of the people that commission and manage health and social care services.

Stronger Together facilitated a meeting between Government Office South East and representatives of the local voluntary and community sector in order to improve understanding of Government expectations of the future role of the voluntary and community sector in service delivery and campaigning. This has led to local work to promote communication between local Councillors and the voluntary and community sector.

Fifteen groups took part in a review of the Reading 2020 Local Area Agreement with local target holders that examined cross-sector work and identified some of the additional impacts that voluntary organisations and community groups make.



Our services

Here is a summary of the services we can offer to help make a difference in Reading – simply contact us to find out more.

Advice Service

www.rva.org.uk

We offer free help with the legalities and technicalities of running or starting a charity or voluntary organisation in Reading. We have knowledgeable and experienced staff and a range of useful resources available.

Funding Advice Service

www.rva.org.uk

We offer advice on all fundraising issues, such as researching appropriate funders, project and budget planning, help with writing a funding strategy, funding needs analysis and monitoring and evaluation. We also give help with writing individual funding applications and provide specific training opportunities through the year.

Training

www.rva.org.uk

RVA organises training opportunities throughout the year for volunteers and paid staff alike. We cover a range of topics which are of ongoing or emerging concern amongst local VCS groups and which respond to changing economic conditions, legislation etc. In addition we also arrange tailored courses for specific needs. Access and affordability are key to RVA's approach to training provision. Current training courses are listed in the RVA directory events calendar.

RVA Directory

www.rvadirectory.org.uk

A sophisticated online service that gives local voluntary and community sector groups the potential of their own micro-site, with details of their service, their news and events. The directory is also regularly updated by the Reading Voluntary Action team with news of our own work and services we offer.

Volunteer Centre Reading

www.volunteercentrereading.org

The Volunteer Centre encourages and supports volunteering in the Reading area by:

- Providing individuals with a personalised match to the right volunteering opportunities for them
- Sharing good practice on managing and working with volunteers
- Organising or signposting relevant training opportunities for volunteers
- Working with employers and with Connect Reading, to promote involvement in volunteering for employees

Stronger Together

www.strongertogether.org.uk

Through support to local forums we provide opportunities for voluntary and community organisations to engage in strategic and operational partnerships with colleagues across Reading. The key forums we support are:

Reading Faith Forum

Reading Children & Voluntary Youth Services

Sakoma (*the Black & Minority Ethnic groups forum*)

The Forum (*Reading Voluntary Sector Forum*)

Reading LINK

www.readinglink.org.uk

The Reading LINK enables voluntary organisations and the local community to influence how health and social care services are provided. The LINK gathers and listens to people's views of the services they receive and informs service providers of how future service provision can be improved. The LINK carries out evidence-gathering projects on those issues it considers to be a priority. Health and social care service providers are legally required to respond to and work with the LINK.

Facts and figures

286

RVA e-bulletins of news and information relevant to the VCS and to stakeholders and partners

RVA information
Mega-mails via
conventional mail

180

training places for community volunteers on a range of topics

£425,000

the sum that the Building for Strength partnership project will bring to Reading in extra Big Lottery Funding during 2009-2012

49

Voluntary Opportunities e-circulars publicising the latest openings

42

our Advice Service supported 42 local organisations, including 31 seeking help with their employment practices, helping to improve the working environment for voluntary sector workers

1,934

members of the public registered with the Volunteer Centre, up 33% on last year, and 50 new organisations placed volunteering opportunities with us

100%

respondents to the RVA user survey said RVA was either excellent or good at keeping them informed of relevant issues

£42,387

11 small local groups received a Grassroots Grant of up to £5000 with application support from RVA

64

our Funding Advice Service supported 64 organisations and provided 168 advice sessions on applications to a wide range of funders

115,101

visitors to the RVA Directory, which contains news and information about 451 local organisations

Abbreviated accounts

Year ended 31 March 2009

	General income £	Funds designated £	Restricted funds £	Total 2009 £	Total 2008 £
Incoming resources					
Grants receivable and other income	267,650	-	317,085	584,735	350,201
Total incoming resources	267,650	-	317,085	584,735	350,201
Resources expended					
Costs of generating funds	8,837	-	-	8,837	8,600
Costs of charitable activities	270,999	-	262,963	533,962	333,199
Governance costs	2,300	-	-	2,300	2,409
Total resources expended	282,136	-	262,963	545,099	344,208
Net incoming (outgoing) resources for the year					
	(14,486)	-	54,122	39,636	5,993
Unrealised gain (loss) on investment	(4,020)	-	-	(4,020)	(532)
Profit on disposal of fixed assets	4,009	-	-	4,009	-
Fund balances brought forward	24,355	74,552	-	98,907	93,446
Fund balances carried forward	9,858	74,552	54,122	138,532	98,907
Represented by					
Investment at market value				10,532	14,552
Cash balance and debtors				161,610	97,263
Less current liabilities				(33,610)	(12,908)
Total net assets				138,532	98,907

Stronger Together is funded by
The Big Lottery Fund



LOTTERY FUNDED

These abbreviated accounts are a summary of information extracted from the annual accounts and may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity.

These accounts are being audited by David Jones & Co of Reading.

Copies of the full accounts can be obtained from Reading Voluntary Action and will be filed with Companies House and the Charities Commission in due course.

Compiled on behalf of the Trustees by Katherine Markova

who makes the difference?

RVA Board of Trustees

The following people have served on RVA's board during the past year.

Sarah Morland (<i>Chair</i>)	Robert Parker (<i>Treasurer</i>)
Katherine Markova	Maureen Bowie
Norma Crockett	Lisa Murrell
Kunku Soota	Ruth Spicer
Robert Foster	Bianca Gallipoli
Mandy Kaur	Mustafa Chaudhary
Peter Beadon	Robert Paice

Tony Page (*Reading Borough Council Representative until May 08*)
Bet Tickner (*Reading Borough Council Representative from July 08*)

RVA staff team

Mike Martin – *Director (to July 09)*
Jeremy Sandell – *Director (from July 09)*
Hazel Broad – *Deputy Director*
Merlyn Barrett – *Training Co-ordinator*
Clare Bonney – *Employee Volunteering Outreach Worker*
Yvette Freeman – *Community Development Officer (Dee Park)*
Lynsey Green – *Community Development Manager*
Jean Jackson – *Office Manager*
Michele Le Sueur – *Volunteer Centre Manager*
Jim Murdoch – *Finance Officer*
Rachel Spencer – *Advice Service Manager*
Nakhat Zahir – *Funding Advice Worker*

Stronger Together team

Anne Laing – *Partnership Development Manager*
Yasmin Bador – *Multi-Fora Co-ordinator*
Anna Fowler – *Forum Co-ordinator*
Paul Harper – *Development Worker*
Jan Hearn – *Multi-Fora Co-ordinator*
Joanita Lwanga – *Development Worker, LSP*

Reading LINK team

Sheena Masoero – *LINK Coordinator*
Elaine Holloway – *LINK Development Worker*
Jagdeep Hunjan – *LINK Administrator*

farewell to the following staff

Debbi Dean – *Finance Officer*
Alan Magness – *Development Worker*

thank you to RVA volunteers

Linda Allan	Steve Masters
Robert Bettridge	Norma Crockett
Una Harding	Gill Levell
Sandra Pollard	Patty Prescott
Kath Sammars	Anne Selinger
Joy Wallbank	Elizabeth Belyavin
Carol Stimson	Tony Short

*Goodbye and good luck to volunteer
Nazym Madaliyeva who helped us during the year*

thank you to our funders whose continuing financial support allows us to provide our services to the voluntary and community sector in Reading

The Big Lottery Fund
CapacityBuilders
Catalyst Communities Housing Association
The Earley Charity
The Englefield Trust
NHS Berkshire West
Reading 2020 Partnership
Reading Borough Council
Reading St Lawrence Church Lands

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