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Premalatha Sudarshan

Crèche Workers

Farida Masud

Shahla Maqsd

Administrators

Petra Robinson

Bhavya Bhandary

Registered Company Number

6442616
(England and Wales)

Registered Charity Number

1123017

Registered Office

94 London Street
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 4SJ

0118 959 5455
rclinfo@yahoo.co.uk
www.rclc.org.uk

Reading Community Learning Centre

Annual Report 2018



Reading Community
Learning Centre



"a unique socially inclusive approach to learning"

Who we are

Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC) is a charity that helps ethnic minority women and their families living in the Reading area. We reach out and empower isolated and vulnerable women to grow their skills, confidence and independence. We do this through informal learning programmes, support and friendship. Most of our women are migrants or refugees who speak little or no English and have limited experience outside their home. We attract around 300 learners each year from 25 countries. We are completely financially dependent on grants, donations and earned income from lettings.

Trustees' report

This has been another exciting but tough year for the Centre. Exciting because this year we have worked with even more migrant and refugee women, and, with funding from Comic Relief and considerable learner and staff help, we have completed a participatory needs assessment with the University of Reading; and tough because of the continuing funding cuts of 50% from Reading Borough Council and a very competitive fundraising climate. As always, our staff and volunteers have been amazing, contributing not only their skills and time, but also ensuring that the centre is a warm, welcoming family for the migrants and refugees who visit. A huge thank you to all of them.

Centre Manager's report by Aisha Malik

I have been working at RCLC for eight years now and it still feels like it is new, fresh and in its infancy; growing continuously and spreading its branches. RCLC is about empowering all women in our community to have the belief and the right that they too can achieve, have a voice where they are safe and free to talk, be heard and dream for a better future for themselves and their families. This year has been phenomenal! Not only have we maintained our core programme of activities, but we have built on them by running much needed conversation classes twice a week instead of once and by adding a pre-entry conversation class thanks to funding from the DCLG Controlling Migration Fund. The Comic Relief Core Strength grant has been a lifeline this year in enabling not only our research project by Reading University to come to fruition but also by increasing our outreach and support work on a one to one basis and by reaching out to new isolated BAME groups. Their funding for the administrator post has meant that the outreach worker no longer has to cover administrative duties. In consequence the number of core learners on our programmes this year has increased by 35% from last year. However as the cuts to our budget continue we ask more and more from our staff and volunteers and miraculously they always rise to the challenge and more. RCLC is a family of learners, staff and volunteers and without the dedication and sheer determination of the staff and volunteers the centre would cease to exist. Thank you to you all and to our funders.

Case Study

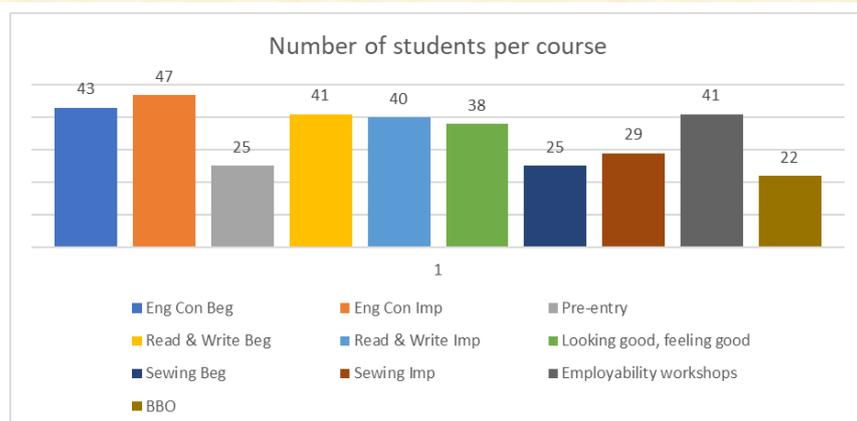
Learner C came to this country in 2016 to escape the war in Syria. She was in a refugee camp before coming to England. It was an extremely hard life in the camps and was just as bad as the war for her. She was not happy and was very sick; she needed surgery. They had no work, no money and were reliant on handouts as they had no one who could help especially as all their family were dispersed in different camps. Learner C's family; which included three sisters and one brother; are still in the camps hoping to join her one day. When learner C arrived the first thing she wanted to do was to speak English, so she could talk to everyone she met and understand how to live her life in this new country. She wanted to speak with her neighbours and get a job. Learner C said,

"We have a very helpful teacher and manager. Everybody is good. I like that it is just women, good. No men. I have no problem with men but with women I feel free. Now I feel stronger, I can speak. I can go shopping, school and talk to neighbours. English is better improving a lot. When I came I was scared, quiet. Now I am stronger, with friendly with friends. I am healthy. My children and husband are also very good. People here are really nice here. I have made friends in class. I am very happy"



Over the academic year 2017/2018

- 351 learners enrolled on our core programme of courses (6 English conversation beginners and improvers, 6 reading beginners improvers courses, 6 sewing classes, 3 health and beauty classes, 3 Employability courses, 6 employability workshops, 3 volunteer led ESOL Cafes and 3 volunteer led knitting clubs.
- 27 men and women completed our accredited Mental Health First Aid Courses
- 36 women received information on how to report race hate crimes, who to report it to and the support available with the Mayor of Reading
- 39 women have completed our depression, stress and anxiety workshops (part of a series of mental health programmes for BAME women) delivered by Rashmi Shankar lead clinical psychologist Newbury
- In partnership with Thames Valley Police we held our first World Cafe in May 2017. A total of 90 women, police officers and stall holders attended the event
- Reading Lifeline (baby loss and pregnancy support group) talked to 70 women at RCLC about their services
- 25 women took part in the Healthwatch research on the experience's women had of using the NHS
- 36 women received information on how to report race hate crimes, who to report it to and the support available, with the Mayor of Reading.
- 51 women have attended 3 anxiety and depression workshops taught by Dr Rashmi Shankar, Clinical Psychologist.
- 105 women received information at energy saving workshops held at the Centre delivered by the Reading Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Reading Lifeline (baby loss and pregnancy support group) talked to 70 women about their services and how the women can access them.
- A PCSO from Thames Valley Police was invited to talk to 40 women about how to protect their children from online abuse, as well as how to use the internet safely.
- Reading Your Way talked to 45 women about the services Reading Your Way can offer and how to access them. Since then we have had learners taking up one to one support with Reading Your Way which has taken place at the Centre.
- The Real Business Club talked to 20 women about their one to one service in supporting people to start their own business.
- MacMillan Cancer talked to 30 women about their services and volunteering with them. Three of our learners are now trained volunteers with MacMillan Cancer.
- RVA presented information to 30 women on their supported volunteering.
- 47 women attended the Awards for All funded programme 'Empowering Women Through Physical Activity' involving Yoga, Pilates and Zumba in partnership with Sports Works.
- RCLC'S first befriending meeting took place for 20 women (11 befrienders and 9 women) at the Centre.
- 156 elderly Pakistani women took part in seated exercise classes, ESOL Skills for Health and health workshops delivered by health professionals on topics such as depression, cancer, diabetes, keeping fit, strokes and TB in partnership with the Pakistani Community Centre.
- 126 elderly Asian men and women took part in the English conversation, healthy eating and health workshops delivered by health professionals on topics such as depression, cancer, diabetes, keeping fit, strokes and TB in partnership with the Indian Community Association.
- 42 elderly Nepali men and women took part in the ESOL Skills for Health classes in partnership with CommuniCare
- 62 elderly African Caribbean men and women took part in healthy eating, seated exercise and cooking workshops in partnership with the Globe.



Learner Demographics

351 learners enrolled on our core programme of courses

- 89% of our core programme learners have no UK qualifications or are at an entry level in ESOL
- 37% of learners have a degree or higher from their home country
- 81% of our learners are unemployed whilst 17% of our learners work part time
- 38% of our learners are on benefits and 5% of our learners are retired
- 16% of our learners use the crèche, a lifeline for those who cannot afford childcare costs
- Learners came from 34 different countries with the majority from the following; India (18%), Syria (10%), Pakistan (9%), Nepal (8%), Morocco (8%), China (5%), Spain (5%), Libya (4%), Afghanistan (4%), Bangladesh (3%), Algeria (3%), Ecuador (2%), Sri Lanka (2%) Guinea (2%), Zanzibar (2%), Italy (2%)
Current learners speak 24 different languages and are from 26 countries all over the world. 26% of the learners on the courses this year spoke Arabic as their first language compared to 19% last year.
- 51% of our learners are aged 31-40; 23% are aged 41-50; 8% are aged 19-30; 18% are 51 plus
- 11% of our learners are refugees and 2% are asylum seekers
- 61% of our learners live in five of the six of Reading's most deprived wards
- 7% of learners disclosed that they needed additional support
- 14% of the learners went into employment or volunteering
- 62% of our learners progressed onto internal courses, 10% onto accredited courses outside of RCLC and 17% progressed onto other courses in the community
- There are 10 - 15 people on the waiting list for each course offered by the Centre
- Current learners come from 26 different countries

Our evaluation work shows:

- 99% said they had improved their confidence and language skills. They felt that they could now 'venture' out where they wouldn't have gone before with their new confidence and independence. E.g. talk to neighbors, go shopping, get on a bus, visit the doctor or hospital, or visit their children's school on their own. They report being more comfortable with speaking to their children about their homework from school and feeling more able to help if needed, as a result of attendance. One learner mentioned being able now to talk to their grandchildren
- 91% of learners had made friends with women quite often from different backgrounds on the courses, thus reducing their loneliness and isolation. This is hugely important for community cohesion and connecting people who are isolated across cultures.
- 94% said they now knew who to go to ask for help and advice.
- 97% said that they had learnt new skills.
- 96% felt that they now had more confidence to go out and do other activities and 93% felt that they were more independent.
- 91% reported that their health had improved by coming on the courses. Learners reported feeling happier (97%), less isolated, reduced stress and depression, improved mental health and feeling more supported. This was particularly true for single parents and those who had no family in the UK

Our learners say:

"On reflection, my journey so far has been wonderful, a dream come true. Thanks to the Team at RCLC, it has changed my life!" "It is warm in here. I felt welcomed. Everyone is happy. I enjoy meeting other cultures and religions." "Coming to RCLC helped me learn English which helped me with day to day life with shopping, work, doctor and hospital."



Reading University needs assessment

The University of Reading and RCLC completed a joint research into the needs of ethnic minority women living in Reading. The project was funded by Comic Relief. The findings and final report were presented by the researchers at a packed meeting of statutory and voluntary organisations held at RCLC on the 19 July in the presence of the Mayor of Reading.

The key findings of this study, which involved interviews with 144 women, are that:

- Women from ethnic minorities in Reading are suffering from a vicious cycle of isolation and poor English language skills.
- Learning English and developing cross cultural ties is important for ethnic minority women, and many do not have the means to develop these, leading to isolation in the community.
- Women with the necessary English language skills, who also have social ties, benefit by feeling better in themselves – happier, more confident, and more integrated. These are mutually reinforcing, and the fact that RCLC addresses both is of added value.
- The research revealed that different ethnicities tend to struggle with different forms of integration, and it would appear that RCLC is targeting the ethnicities most in need.

The report identifies that a women-specific service for ethnic minorities in Reading has been one way in which RCLC is meeting these needs, providing a space for some of the most vulnerable in the local community. The report also identifies ways in which RCLC can develop its social integration work by collaborating with other organisations and partners, especially involving local volunteers for whom English is their first language and support the women to develop their future paths into other areas of integration.



Thank you

Thanks to grants and contracts from Reading Borough Council, The Lloyds Foundation, The Berkshire Community Foundation, , NLDC Grant from New Directions, Big Lottery Fund & European Social Fund - Building Better Opportunities, The Co-Op Local Community Fund, Marsh Christian Foundation, Garfield Weston, Awards for All, Reading Soup, Inner Wheel and Comic Relief, and rental income from WEA and Smart Works and the DCLG Controlling Migration Fund, we have been able to run a sustained programme of activities throughout the year.



Statement of Financial Activities				
Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2018				
			2018	2017
	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
	£	£		£
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Donations	3,035	2	3,037	8,223
Incoming resources from charitable activities				
Core programme	10,000	96,348	106,348	85,342
Creche	14,552	-	14,552	13,118
Community Education	-	23,348	23,348	9,938
Facilities	12,823	-	12,823	17,417
Investment Income	-	-	-	42
Other incoming resources	22,179	-	22,179	23,182
Total incoming resources	62,589	119,698	182,287	157,262
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Charitable activities				
Core programme	9,100	73,422	82,522	60,044
Creche wages and assistance	7,002	6,963	13,965	11,354
Other activities including advice and information	37,938	-	37,938	49,274
Usage of equipment	301	226	527	9,747
Community education	5,482	8,745	14,227	10,227
Independent examination fees	3,120	-	3,120	3,072
Total resources expended	62,943	89,356	152,299	143,718
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING)				
RESOURCES BEFORE TRANSFERS	(354)	30,342	29,988	13,544
Gross transfers between funds	275	(275)	-	-
Net incoming/(Outgoing) resources	(79)	30,067	29,988	13,544
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	76,342	31,307	107,649	94,105
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	76,263	61,374	137,637	107,649
		Transfer between funds	2018	2017
	Net Movement			
Restricted funds				
Restricted funds (grants in advance and fixed assets)	30,342	(275)	61,374	31,307
Unrestricted Funds				
General Fund	(354)	(9,725)	2,263	12,342
General reserve	-	5,000	45,000	40,000
Designated reserve (staff salaries)	-	-	20,000	20,000
Designated reserve (Equipment)	-	-	4,000	4,000
Designated reserve (premises redecoration)	-	5,000	5,000	-
Total carried forward	29,988	-	137,637	107,649