

Reaching People



*Commitment to
Lasting Change*

240+

The number of organisations
supported by Reaching People
in 2023-24

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



Beautiful handiwork from the Knit & Knatter group, part of Reaching People's social prescribing project

A message from the Chair

Hello,

I am very pleased, in my new role as the Reaching People Chair of Trustees, to present the consortium's latest annual report on the board's behalf.

The year 2023-24 marked the tenth anniversary of Reaching People in its present form. This major milestone in the consortium's life saw the continued development of our focus and purpose as we strive to support Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's varied communities through collaboration with the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) and beyond.

There is no doubt that Reaching People's membership and project work are at the heart of the consortium. Through the year our projects and partners continued to build ways of working that are responsive to our city's and counties' people and communities.

This responsive approach is seeing two key focal areas of work and approaches to delivery emerge:

- Digital inclusion is now firmly embedded as a vital theme in the consortium's project work; empowering people by developing their digital skills is crucial in our fast-changing world and Reaching People is delighted to have grown a solid body of on-the-ground experience in this area.
- The consortium has also, through the Leading in Leicester and Leicestershire project and the Community Connectors Pilot Programme, further recognised the crucial value of supporting communities to use the resources they already possess in problem solving for the benefit of all. We are committed to building on this pilot and extending its reach in the year to come.

As we reflect on the past year's work presented in this report, the ever-changing external environment and the benefits that our membership and partners bring to the consortium, there is no doubt that Reaching People continues to bring value to our sector and communities and we look forward to fruitful collaborations in the year ahead.

In closing, may I extend my heartfelt thanks to our out-going chair of trustees, Mandy Wardle-McLeish, for her dedication to the consortium and its development.



Jenny Hand,
Chair of Trustees

Digital Inclusion:

A strong, vital thread running through our projects

Confident digital skills have become a vital part of everyday life in the UK, but many adults are being left behind still, falling through the 'digital skills gap'. Reaching People has, over the year, continued to tackle this skills poverty, enabling real life computer skills training and equipment to be taken into our communities.

In 2020, 22% of UK adults* were estimated to be without the digital skills needed for everyday life



Refurb IT & Health+

203%

IT donations achieved by September 2024, compared to the project target!

Refurb IT, funded by the Leicester & Leicestershire Economic Partnership, creates a circular economy. Businesses donate laptops, phones, tablets etc and the project refurbishes them to then be donated via our members to those experiencing digital exclusion. Not only does Reaching People ensure provision of the kit, but training as well!

Health+ has been delivered by an enthusiastic volunteer team, training health surgery staff and members of the public to use the NHS app, GP online services and how to access health information on-line.

75%

of respondents, after training, were positive about registering for the NHS app

99%

of surgery staff felt more confident in using the app following their training

Moneywise Living

Moneywise Living is a collaboration aimed at tackling the cost of living crisis. It is more than just advice giving; the project has built people's digital skills to enable them to be independent and empowered in managing their finances and day-to-day living.

Working in partnership with Leicestershire Cares, Action Homeless and Community Advice and Law Service (CALs), through the year the project has helped local people to:

Take up energy efficiency measures

Use comparison web sites

Access benefit support

Use digital skills in job hunting

Find cost of living help

Community Connectors Pilot: The way forward for community leadership

Leading in Leicester and Leicestershire (LLL)

Reaching People's flagship leadership project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, drew to a close in April 2024. A review was undertaken, highlighting the impressive impact of the project during its two-year lifetime.

333 individuals
from
120 organisations
took part in
17 programmes &
workshops

'This course has helped me understand that leadership is about fostering collaboration, building strong relationships, and creating an environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to contribute their best.'
LLL participant

Participants built
Confidence
Networks
Collaboration
And much more...

The end of LLL was celebrated with a high profile seminar led by Dame Julia Unwin. Dame Julia's distinguished career included tenure as Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the seminar was an opportunity to learn from her vast experience, which positions her as a leading authority on philanthropy, governance and civil society. Attendees said afterwards they felt 'inspired', 'challenged' and 'optimistic'.

Community Connectors Pilot

In 2023-24, under the banner of Leading in Leicester and Leicestershire, Reaching People delivered the Community Connectors Pilot.

The pilot aimed to develop a training programme for VCSE organisations, the purpose of which was to strengthen the sector and empower communities by building connections, together with growing an understanding of the assets already within them.

Via evaluation the participants reported:

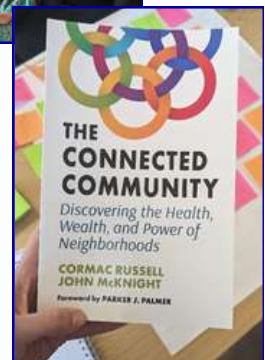
- An increased understanding of Asset Based Community Development and confidence in using the approach and its tools in their work
- A positive experience of spending time with sector-wide staff and volunteers, visiting their places of work and building beneficial connections



Participants at The Emerald Centre: benefitting from building connections

Photos:
Helen Bazen,
THINK FC

Reaching People is committed to building on this pilot and finding ways to bring its learning to future projects.



Russell's and McKnight's book provided the pilot's foundation

The Reaching People Environmental Programme

A showcase for the strength of local, small projects

The 2023-2024 Reaching People Environmental Programme was delivered in collaboration with the Leicestershire & Rutland Community Foundation. The money had been entrusted to Reaching People through the dissolution of local environment charity, Groundwork Leicester & Leicestershire. Reaching People committed to using the funds to give Leicestershire a better life and to leave an environmental legacy.

Small projects Big impact
24 organisations across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland delivered a wide range of environmentally focussed projects with their communities



Ekojoe Market Garden Project

Not only did the projects benefit local natural and urban environments, but they also showed how engaging in nature can produce great outcomes for people's health - both physical and mental!



Soft Touch Arts, Environmental Creative workshops

Community gardens

Creative arts

Nature research

Education

Supporting mental health

Improving access to nature

Inspiring & exciting all ages



East Goscote Parish Council Environment Project

The programme has shown that:

- Small funding pots can have a big impact
- Partnership is vital to bring meaningful change
- Environmental change can't happen in isolation

The Environmental Programme Review is available from Reaching People, detailing the programme.

Partnership & Collaboration

Working together beyond our membership

Food Hubs

During the year we worked with Leicester City Food Partnership, supporting 22 food hubs to run across Leicester City.

61,550 households were supported.

Leicester City Council funding enabled us to recruit a coordinator to help foodbanks move to more sustainable food supplies, with food coming directly from suppliers.

Working collaboratively, Reaching People successfully developed the 'traditional' food bank model into food hubs, offering extended support, training and services through Foodbank+. RP member Somali Development Services collaborated with Belgrave Community Centre to use Garment and Textile Workers Trust funding to create Food Hubs in Highfields and Belgrave, supporting former textile workers.

'Reaching People has proven time and time again, we are more when we work together.'

Kieran Breen
Leicestershire Cares Ltd



A packed house at the Belgrave International Women's Day event, supported by the Reaching People social prescribing lead.

Social Prescribing & Older People

In May 2023 Leicester was chosen as one of two locations in the country to take part in national research by the Independent Age and National Academy of Social Prescribing (NASP). The research, which Reading People was involved in, sought to understand how social prescribing can help to meet the needs of people over 65, who are the most marginalised, experiencing financial hardship and social isolation. The aim was to learn from each location and develop policy and practice.

In January 2024 Reaching People was asked to implement some of our recommendations. In the first three months alone we had connected with over 17 organisations in two city target areas, Belgrave and New Parks, and connected with over 300 older people. We identified social prescribing needs such as financial advice, digital skills, general well-being etc and ensured these groups and individuals were adequately supported.

The Reaching People Model

Work founded on partnership and collaboration



*Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.*



Helen Keller

We are delighted to be able to showcase within this report leading projects from the consortium's year of operation, 2023-24.

Reaching People's members and partners are rooted in our local communities of place and common interest. Therefore the work the consortium delivers grows directly out of our communities and their experiences.

Work this past year has focussed on six core areas:

- Digital inclusion
- Leadership in the VCSE sector and our collaboration with communities
- Health
- Food security
- Financial security and stability
- Environmental development

None of these areas stand alone. The consortium, through collaboration and partnership, has sought to connect knowledge, skills and expertise so that reach is extended as far as possible. Strong examples of this approach are found in the ways projects have been linked; Health+ has been linked with Food Hubs and Moneywise Living with the Social Prescribing and Older People initiative, resulting in projects of depth and greater impact.

Reaching People's membership model not only brings in vital funds to support our work and effectiveness, but also makes real the mantra that 'together we are stronger'.

We hope you enjoy these small tasters of our work and we welcome enquiries about projects and membership.

Sangeeta Patel & Sarah Richards

Joint CEOs, Reaching People

Join us!

A call to action

Reaching People invites VCSE organisations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to join us in our mission to develop and strengthen our sector for the benefit of all local communities.

Reaching People



Commitment To Lasting Change

YOUR Leicester, Leicestershire
& Rutland Voluntary Sector
Consortium

STRONGER TOGETHER

For a membership
application form email:
admin@reachingpeople.co.uk

*A worker from Action Homeless shares his lived experience at the Reaching People 2023 AGM.
Photo credit: Vince Preston*

As a Reaching People member SDS has now increased our network with other partner agencies, which has improved our marketing strategies and given the opportunity to work with other partners and share good practice. This membership has allowed SDS organisation to grow and offer better opportunities to local communities. Reaching People staff have made SDS inclusive and welcomed SDS with open arms.

*Maryan Anshur,
CEO*

Somali Development Services

For all the latest news
& information on
Reaching People visit:

reachingpeople.co.uk

As a member of Reaching People, Action Homeless has greatly benefitted from the collaborative network of like-minded partners. This partnership has enabled us to leverage collective resources, share best practice and ultimately enhance our ability to reach and support our beneficiaries more effectively.

*Mark Grant, CEO
Action Homeless*

Thank you

Reaching People

The Reaching People Board of Trustees thanks our members for their contribution in the impact the consortium has had.

The Reaching People consortium thanks donors and grant providers for enabling us to continue our work in our sector and communities:

De Montfort University
European Social Fund
Garment and Textile Workers Trust
Integrated Care Board - Better Care Fund
Leicester & Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (formerly the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership)
Leicester City Council Household Support Fund
Leicester City Council, UK Shared Prosperity Fund funded by UK government
National Academy of Social Prescribing
NHS Charities Together
National Lottery Community Fund

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Reaching People is the trading name of Leicestershire Voluntary Sector Resource Agency