

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022

CCB



WHO WE ARE

Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB) is an independent charity with almost 50 years of experience in community development work, originally founded in 1973 as a Rural Community Council.

We are an active member of Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) the national body for 38 charitable local development agencies.

Our **vision** is for all communities in Berkshire to be strong, resilient, sustainable and able to take control of their own futures.

CCB's **purpose** is to inspire action at a community level that improves people's quality of life. We work across Berkshire, with a particular focus on rural areas. We run projects that provide advice, support and training that:

- reduce poverty & rural disadvantage
- improve rural health & wellbeing
- increase digital inclusion & social connectedness

HIGHLIGHTS 2021-22

Learning

We held 11 adult community learning events and helped 128 learners develop new skills and confidence on topics connected with enhancing their community.

Reducing poverty

Low income families made significant savings from following our one-to-one telephone advice support. We helped one family save £657.60 on their annual household budget.

Supporting Village Halls

We enabled six Village Halls in Berkshire to set up new exercise classes to help reduce isolation and improve activity for the older or disabled people, those with long-term health conditions and young people.

WELCOME

Welcome to our annual review 2022. Here you can find out about our achievements over the last year and learn a little about our plans for the future. We have a lot to be thankful for. CCB's talented staff team and Trustee Board have worked really hard over the last 12 months to make sure that our small charity has had a big impact. We have been challenged by the pandemic and restricted by our capacity, but remain dedicated to our existing beneficiaries, all while planning to realise our most ambitious aspirations for years.

During the last year, CCB trustees, staff and stakeholders helped us identify three important aims for our future work. Over the next three years, we will focus on reducing poverty and rural disadvantage, improving rural health and well-being, and increasing digital inclusion and social connectedness, through delivering our existing projects as well as developing new ones.

We have an exciting and challenging year ahead as the restrictions of the last 2 years continue to ease and we expand our work to further address the needs of rural communities in Berkshire. In order to achieve this, we need to broaden our horizons and work in partnership with more of our peers than ever if we are to increase our impact. The cost of living crisis and global geopolitical issues mean difficult times ahead for all of us, but we remain committed to doing everything we can to support communities in Berkshire to be strong, resilient, sustainable and able to take control of their own futures.



Tim Parry, CEO



Sarah Morland, Chair

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Village halls often provide the only place to meet within a rural community, providing vital and diverse support to improve quality of life, particularly for those who are least able to travel to more distant centres of activity.

The key to the continuing survival of village halls is the volunteer management committees who have to deal with an increasing burden of legislation, yet manage to keep their halls financially sustainable mostly by earning their own income and local fundraising.

Our Community Buildings Advice Service (CBAS) membership ensures that committees have access to all the information, advice, resources, and support they need to confidently manage a welcoming, safe and efficient facility.



SUPPORTING VILLAGE HALLS

The last year has seen our service grow with 77 halls becoming members.

We supported Village Halls to get more Covid grants, ensuring that they remained financially viable over lockdowns.

Thanks to our training and advice halls have been able to claim between £10,000 and £22,000 in grant funding depending upon their status and unitary authority.

In January 2022 we hosted the opening of Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) National Village Halls Week in Bucklebury Victory Room.

We ran the 'Activating Village Halls' project with funding from Get Berkshire Active. Outcomes included halls providing new low-impact movement classes for older, disabled, and isolated and BoxFit for young people. 10 new courses of activity were delivered in 6 different locations in Berkshire - helping to reduce isolation and improve physical activity for their residents.



REDUCING POVERTY & RURAL DISADVANTAGE

CCB's Fuel & Water Poverty Family Project tackles fuel and water poverty in low-income families in Berkshire by giving people the skills and confidence they need to reduce the impact of utility bills on household budgets.

In 2021-22, due to lockdowns and face-to-face events being limited, we have been providing an increased amount of one-to-one telephone advice support. The need for this support is increasing as we go through 2022.

In 2021-22 **we delivered 7 drop-in sessions**, offering fuel poverty and energy advice, which took place in Children's Centres and Homestart groups - reaching **49 families** in need of support.



"The advice given by Helen has helped me massively and I am now in a better situation and grateful for the help."

108 in-depth telephone advice consultations were given, with some situations being complex and requiring multiple calls. Each family needed between 1 - 5 hours of support

"Having the advice eased my mind, I knew I could be saving instead of worrying so much"
Lisa is now saving £230 per year after receiving advice.



FUEL POVERTY & ENERGY ADVICE

In the last year, we delivered 10 training sessions to frontline workers that support low-income families in Berkshire. These included Homestart, practitioners in Slough & Bracknell, a domestic abuse charity, and Social Work Teams.

In total, we **trained 114 practitioners** who will be able to pass on information and support to almost **2000 families** in the next 6 months!

"This training was fantastic. I had no idea so much was available to assist people who face challenges fuelling their homes. Infinitely useful and so important. Thank you!"

Support worker at Alana House,
Domestic Abuse Charity.



CCB Oil Club



The CCB Oil club was set up to increase choice and to ensure that anyone using oil to heat their home had access to at least one opportunity in Berkshire for joining in with collective purchase. In 2021-22 our Oil Club members **saved almost £12,000** on their heating oil. Recently oil prices have risen exponentially and in March 2022 prices were more than double those paid in March 2021! This club will continue to help and draw attention to the difficulties off-grid, mostly rural, homes face in Berkshire.

COMMUNITY LEARNING

CCB offers a wide range of training courses for adults, specially designed to support and strengthen community groups in Berkshire.

We currently have funding support from West Berkshire & Wokingham Borough Adult Community Learning so are able to deliver free or low-cost training sessions in these areas.

2021-22 saw us expand our online offering and we were able to deliver courses to **128 learners** on the following topics:

- Understanding community-led housing models
- Moving Communities Webinar
- Walking for Health workshop
- Safeguarding for Community Buildings
- Low carbon heating systems and funding opportunities for Community Buildings
- First Aid for Rural Communities
- Village Halls Quality Standard training - Hallmark

We also happily squeezed in a few face to face training sessions, when covid regulations relaxed, including;

- Emergency First Aid for Volunteers in Finchampstead
- Funding & budgeting training for refurbishment projects in village halls in Bucklebury
- Essential Trustee Skills in Englefield

"I felt the webinar was really informative and Kirsty took us through a step by step process which was easy to follow. Loads of great resources and really useful to have her in depth knowledge and experience."

Learner from Moving Communities Webinar.

"Having been involved in three of the four incidents discussed it is very reassuring to know you are doing the right thing! It's all about confidence so you panic less."

Learner from First Aid for Rural Communities.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

CCB works with the Collaborative Housing Hub, hosted by our sister charity in Oxfordshire, to bring information, advice, and training to people in Berkshire. Community-led housing schemes have the potential to provide much-needed affordable homes to people with local connections to Berkshire's villages and towns.



"Really enjoyed this course by confident presenters who knew their stuff. I was impressed by the high standard."

How to Start a Community
Land Trust learner

DIGITAL INCLUSION

A focus group held by CCB in the autumn of 2021 revealed three significant barriers to digital inclusion;

- availability of affordable internet connections
- skills and confidence to use online services safely
- affordable and appropriate devices

We seek partnerships with organisations that can help us address these barriers in all communities.

"People least digitally engaged spend £348 more on utility bills."

From Consumer Digital
Engagement Report by
Lloyds



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to our brilliant funders, without which, we could not exist!

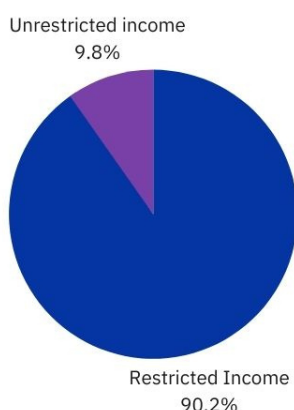
- Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
- Allied Westminster
- Amazon
- Arnold Clark Community Fund
- Berkshire Community Foundation
- Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- Chiltern Estate
- Corn Exchange
- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

- Englefield Trust
- Get Berkshire Active
- Greenham Trust Ltd
- NAVCA
- Norris & Fisher
- Syder Foundation
- The Good Exchange
- The Payne-Gallwey Charitable Trust
- The Sackler Trust
- The Schroder Charity Trust
- West Berkshire Council
- Wokingham Borough Council

Special thanks go to our fantastic members who support our core functions for key services;

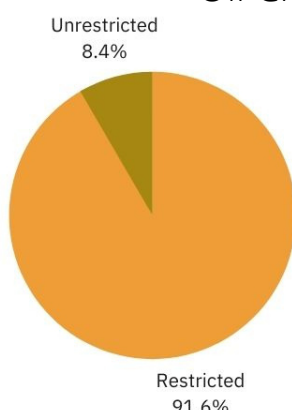
- Community Building Advice Service Members
- CCB Members
- Oil Club Members

Income & Expenditure



£103,549

Income



£101,991

Expenditures

Huge thanks goes to our hardworking Board of Trustees in 2021-22:

- Sarah Morland
- Peter Sampson
- Bob Lyon
- Peter Thorn
- Alex Hedges
- Mark Nevitt
- Raghavendra Vaishampayan

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