AUTUMN 2026 NEWSLETTER

RCT by the numbers

The figures from 1 April to 31 August show another busy five months for RCT, with Care & Share, the Breakfast Club and the work of Support Workers Mark and Alex continuing to reach hundreds of people across the community. During the period, 842 people attended Care & Share, where visitors can enjoy a hot meal alongside access to practical help and advice. A further 399 people attended the Tuesday Breakfast Club. Away from the weekly sessions, Mark and Alex continued to provide support across Ayr – meeting people one-to-one, over the phone and through outreach work in the community.

Five months of support at a glance

- ⇒ 842 Care & Share attendances
- ⇒ 399 Breakfast Club attendances
- ⇒ 140 people receiving one-to-one support
- ⇒ 248 support phone calls
- ⇒ 58 people supported through Day of Action activity
- ⇒ 148 contacts through homeless hostel visits
- ⇒ 46 people supported at the Foodbank
- ⇒ 34 at the Baptist Church
- ⇒ 64 at Lochside Community Centre
- ⇒ 278 fuel vouchers provided
- ⇒ 108 food vouchers provided
- ⇒ 39 SIM cards provided

Behind every number is an individual situation – whether someone needs help putting food on the table, keeping their home warm, staying connected or simply finding the right service to turn to.









Double your donation this Christmas

RCT is thrilled to have been invited by the Vardy Foundation to take part in the **Big Give Christmas Challenge** this December. Donations made to RCT through the campaign can be doubled pound-for-pound while funds remain available. Give £10 and it becomes £20. Give £25 and it becomes £50. Give £50 and RCT could receive £100.

The Vardy Foundation, established by businessman and philanthropist Sir Peter Vardy, supports charities tackling poverty, homelessness and addiction, as well as projects strengthening families and communities. Its invitation brings RCT into one of the UK's biggest fundraising events and gives our work valuable exposure to a wider audience.

In 2025, the **Big Give Christmas Challenge** raised more than £57.4 million for 1,591 charities through more than 152,000 donations. This year's campaign runs from 1–8 December, when RCT will be taking part for the first time. So, stay tuned. We'll be sharing full details of RCT's campaign and how to donate closer to December.







Mangia! serves up £267 for Care & Share



There was a distinctly Italian flavour at Riverside as RCT trustee Gill Hyslop swapped her laptop for an apron to host **Mangia! An Italian Summer Feast.** The four-hour event combined live demonstrations with hands-on cooking, as guests learned new techniques before sitting down together to enjoy the food they had helped prepare.

On the menu was Garden Focaccia, handmade Cavatelli with Pesto alla Trapanese, an Italian Fennel, Red Cabbage and Citrus platter, followed by classic Tiramisu. Guests also took home a booklet packed with recipes, tips and Italian kitchen know-how from the day. Most importantly, £267 was raised, helping Care & Share continue providing hot meals, practical help and friendship to people across Ayr.



"Food has an incredible way of bringing people together, and that's exactly what this event is all about," says Gill. "I want people to leave feeling inspired to cook these dishes at home, having learned a few new techniques along the way, while knowing they've also helped support the important work Care & Share does every week in our community."



Next up

Feast! comes to Riverside Church on Saturday 14 November from 10am–2pm, with another four-hour interactive cooking experience raising funds for RCT. Expect live demonstrations, hands-on cooking and professional tips before sitting down together to enjoy the dishes you've helped prepare. Tickets are £35 per person, including lunch, refreshments and a recipe booklet. Places are limited and advance booking is essential – contact Jim Cobb or Lizzie Adrain to reserve your place. Every ticket sold supports the ongoing work of RCT.











Betty is a SAVA star

A very special congratulations goes to Betty Sinclair, who has received a Lifetime Award at the South Ayrshire Volunteer Awards (SAVA). Organised by Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA), the awards have celebrated the contribution of volunteers across South Ayrshire since 2012, recognising the individuals and groups who freely give their time to make their communities stronger. A Lifetime Award is particularly fitting for Betty, whose commitment to RCT and Care & Share has seen her give countless hours of her time over the years – whether helping raise vital funds or rolling up her sleeves in the kitchen. Betty wasn't the only familiar face recognised. Susan Hodgins, Rebecca Hughes, Quintin Young and Gary Ward also received awards for their volunteering, making it a particularly proud occasion for everyone at RCT. Congratulations to them all – and thank you for the time, energy and commitment you continue to give to RCT and the wider community.



£220 in the bag at Asda

A huge thank you to everyone who gave their time to support RCT's recent charity collection at Asda, which raised a fantastic £220. Volunteers spent the day collecting donations from generous shoppers, with every penny raised going towards RCT's work supporting people in the local community. The £220 total is another great example of what can be achieved when volunteers, local businesses and the wider community come together. Thank you to everyone who helped on the day – and, of course, to every Asda shopper who stopped to donate.



Visitors get stuck in

We have welcomed some special visitors recently, including Helen from Clarins, who joined the team as part of her volunteer outreach. She certainly got stuck in, helping to serve guests, chatting with those attending and bringing plenty of enthusiasm and good humour to the afternoon. Jo Ford from Carers Gateway South Ayrshire also dropped in, helping strengthen links with the service supporting young carers aged five and over. It's always a pleasure to welcome visitors, share what happens at Care & Share and build connections across the wider community.





3 big birthdays

There have been candles aplenty at RCT, with three milestone birthdays to celebrate. Bruce Bunten turned 60, Susan Hodgins celebrated her 70th, while John Sinclair will reach the grand age of 80 in October. Happy birthday to all three from everyone at RCT – although with an impressive 210 years between them, we're not attempting to fit all those candles on one cake!

The Chosen comes to Riverside

A television drama that has reached 350 million viewers across more than 190 countries is coming to Riverside this autumn – and you can watch it for free. Beginning on Wednesday 16 September from 3pm to 4pm, Riverside Church will screen one complete episode of *The Chosen* every Wednesday for eight weeks. There's no need to book, and juice and snacks will be available.



Created by American filmmaker Dallas Jenkins, *The Chosen* tells the story of Jesus through the experiences of those around him, exploring the personalities, relationships and everyday lives of figures including Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, Matthew and Nicodemus. Its global reach has been extraordinary. Alongside its hundreds of millions of viewers, the series has entered the Guinness World Records as the most translated season of a streaming series, with its first season translated into 125 languages.

Organiser Sarah Hunter hopes watching together will add another dimension to the experience. "I'd like to think that watching with other people creates a sense of community," she says. "The series is free to watch at home if people prefer, but many of those who come along to Riverside value activities that bring people together."

The invitation is open to everyone – whatever their faith and whether or not they attend church. There are no formal discussion sessions, although Sarah is happy to chat with anyone who would like to stay behind after an episode. Further information is available from Jim Cobb on 01292 262686 or help@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk.

Food, glorious food

A hot meal may be what first brings someone through the doors of Care & Share, but around the tables something equally important happens. Every Wednesday, the kitchen team turns donated ingredients, careful planning and plenty of volunteer hours into plates of proper home-cooked food. Sitting down together gives people time to talk, laugh and connect, while the relaxed atmosphere can make it easier to ask for help or speak to one of the services available through Care & Share.

Keeping those plates filled is very much a community effort. Local butcher **Pollok Williamson** regularly donates meat for the weekly lunches. The family business, owned and operated by Stewart and May Duguid, has shops in High Street and Mount Oliphant Crescent in Ayr, as well as Kilmarnock. A heartfelt thank you goes to Stewart and May, manager Kevin and assistant manager Gillian for their continued generosity. Their donations bring plenty of variety to the menu and judging by the empty plates, they're always eagerly appreciated.

Local bakery **Stobbs the Baker** is another regular supporter, supplying rolls and potato scones for the Tuesday Breakfast Club. These staples help the team serve up a warm and filling breakfast each week, while the regular supply means fewer ingredients need to be bought. It's practical, dependable support that makes a difference week after week – so a big thank you to everyone at Stobbs for continuing to rise to the occasion.



Asda Ayr also regularly donates ingredients, giving the kitchen team more to work with when planning meals and helping inspire the variety that appears on the table each Wednesday.

Vertu Toyota Ayr lends a hand in a different way, providing funding towards the fresh ingredients and everyday essentials needed in the kitchen. Our thanks go to general manager Steven Cain and his team for their generous support, which gives the team greater flexibility when planning menus and helps donated supplies go further.

From comforting favourites to special celebration lunches, the kitchen team works hard to make every meal something people can look forward to. And behind every plate is a wider network of local businesses, volunteers and donors helping make it possible.



Friendship wall

These faces capture what Care & Share is all about. Volunteers and attendees come from different walks of life, but week after week they share food, conversation, laughter and, most importantly, friendship. Some come along to lend a hand, others for a little support or company – and many simply enjoy being part of the Care & Share community.



Friendships are formed around the tables, over cups of tea and during the bustle of serving lunch. Familiar faces welcome newcomers, volunteers get to know attendees and conversations that begin over a meal can grow into genuine friendships. There's usually plenty of laughter along the way, too.





Care & Share is also a place where people can simply be themselves. There's no pressure to explain why they've come through the door – a friendly face, a seat at the table and someone to talk to can sometimes be exactly what's needed. There's a real mix of personalities in the room, and that's part of its charm. Birthdays are celebrated, stories are swapped and new friendships continue to form alongside those that have grown over many years.







Our Friendship Wall celebrates some of the people who make Care & Share what it is. Behind every photograph is a different story, but together they show the warmth, friendship and sense of belonging that fill the room each week.







Fashion with Flayr

Pre-loved fashion will take to the catwalk on 24 October, when Rewear & Flayr brings an uplifting celebration of confidence, choice and community to Ayr North Church. The event will feature a fun catwalk showcasing pre-loved clothing, while women attending can browse a selection of quality items and take home their favourites free of charge, thanks to Recycle Ayr. Combining fashion with sustainability and community spirit, Rewear & Flayr aims to help women feel confident while showing that great clothes deserve more than one life. It's a chance to browse, have fun and perhaps discover a new look – while helping keep perfectly good clothing in circulation.



Care & Share

Join us for good food and essential advice. Open for lunch on Wednesdays from 2:00-3:30pm; and for the Breakfast Club on Tuesdays from 10:00-11:00am. If you'd like to come along or find out more, just chat to one of the team below.

Find out more about the work we're doing in the community - including the incredible impact of our Support Workers - by watching our short film on www.facebook.com/riversidecommunitytrust and https://riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

We need you!

We're on the lookout for friendly, reliable volunteers to support our Wednesday lunch service. If you'd like to get involved, please speak to Bruce or Lizzie - we'd be delighted to have you on board.

Got news to share?

If you have a story, update or event you'd like featured in the next newsletter, please speak to Bruce or email Gill



Have your say

We're committed to growing, improving and working better together – and your feedback plays a vital role. If you're a partner or stakeholder, we'd love to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to complete short survey – just scan the QR code to get started.

Your feedback will help us understand what's working well, where we can improve and how we can build even stronger partnerships.



Important numbers

Strategic Manager: Bruce Bunten (07888 664351), brucebunten@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

Operations Manager: Lizzie Adrain (07803 843851), lizzieadrain@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

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Secretary, Riverside Church: Jim Cobb (01292 262686), help@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk