

READING FAMILIES' FORUM CIO

England & Wales · Charity number 1166585

Details

Other names	RFF
Status	Registered
Legal form	CIO
Registered	2016-04-18
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	53 Parkside Road Reading RG30 2BT
Phone	07516 185380
Email	info@readingfamiliesforum.co.uk
Website	http://www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Activities

Objects: TO RELIEVE THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 0-15 YEARS WITH DISABILITIES AND / OR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND TO ASSIST IN ADVANCING THEM IN LIFE SO THAT THEY MAY GROW TO FULL MATURITY AS INDIVIDUALS AND MEMBERS OF SOCIETY FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT IN THE READING BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA BY: • SETTING UP STRUCTURES AND PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES (SURVEYS, MEETINGS, EVENTS, INFORMATION DAYS) TO FACILITATE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FAMILIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS; • PROMOTING AND IMPLEMENTING CO-PRODUCTION IN DECISION MAKING AND PLANNING FOR FUTURE SERVICE PROVISION, SO THAT PARENTS AND CARERS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVEMENTS IN SERVICES; • PROMOTING THE SHARING OF BEST PRACTICE, INFORMED BY STATUTORY AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WITHIN HEALTH, EDUCATION, SOCIAL CARE AND DISABILITY.

Activities: To enable young people aged 0 to 25 years with disabilities or special educational needs and their families to meet and discuss issues with service providers in Reading Borough Council, and local NHS and voluntary sector. To represent parents' and carers' views to these providers and work to coproduce policy. To promote best practice in these services.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body
- **What:** Education/training, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, Disability
- **Who:** Children/young People, People With Disabilities, Other Defined Groups

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** IN THE READING BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA
- Reading

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£58,693	£38,766	-	-
2024-03-31	£24,168	£23,430	-	-
2023-03-31	£15,635	£22,563	-	-
2022-03-31	£24,694	£20,397	-	-
2021-03-31	£13,415	£12,430	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Dr ALICE ELEANOR CARTER		2016-04-18
Emma Griffiths		2026-04-14
Emma Sowden		2026-03-03
Kira Molly Remi Lloyd		2023-11-20
Lynsey McDonald		2017-11-28
PAULINE HAMILTON		2016-04-18

READING FAMILIES' FORUM CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1166585

Accounts



Reading Families' Forum CIO

Annual Report and Accounts

2024/2025

Reading Families' Forum Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Trustees' Annual Report

for the financial year 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Full name of the charity:

Reading Families' Forum Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Other names charity is known by:

RFF, Reading Families' Forum

Registered charity number:

1166585

Charity commission contact:

Ramona Bridgman
5 Carisbrooke Close
Caversham
Reading RG4 6SB

Charity's governing document:

The constitution of Reading Families' Forum CIO, dated 4 March 2016, is available on our website.

How the charity is constituted:

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

How trustees are appointed:

Elected at the AGM by members but may be co-opted by the other Trustees in between AGMs.

Trustees of the charity:

For the year 2024 / 2025 the following were trustees:

Ramona Bridgman	Chair
Lynsey McDonald	Secretary
Alice Carter	Treasurer
Pauline Hamilton	
Kira Lloyd	
Sergio de Gregorio	

Bank:

The Co-operative Bank, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M4 4BE.

Objects of the charity:

To relieve the needs of young people aged 0-25 years with disabilities and / or special educational needs and to assist in advancing them in life so that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society for the public benefit in the Reading Borough Council area by:

- setting up structures and providing opportunities (surveys, meetings, events, information days) to facilitate two-way communication between families and service providers;

- promoting and implementing co-production in decision making and planning for future service provision, so that parents and carers can contribute to improvements in services;
- promoting the sharing of best practice, informed by statutory and voluntary agencies within health, education, social care and disability.

Main activities undertaken:

Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. RFF holds regular Forum meetings where members and service providers meet to discuss issues of concern. RFF holds regular public events, including coffee evenings with a speaker, an annual Information Day, an annual Preparing for Adulthood Day, and a public conference. RFF members represent parents on a variety of committees and working groups within the local authority, and work regularly with key service providers in the Local Authority, NHS and voluntary sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Reading Families' Forum has been a charity since 2016, building on our work to promote co-production between families of children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) and service providers for the last 16 years. (Co-production means developing services together.) We have a membership of 425 parent carers and 994 people follow us on Facebook.

MANAGEMENT

At the last AGM in October 2024 the following trustees were voted in:

- Ramona Bridgman, Chair
- Lynsey McDonald, Secretary
- Alice Carter, Treasurer
- Pauline Hamilton, Kira Lloyd and Sergio de Gregorio.

We have a number of parent carers who have provided invaluable support over the past year, including Beryl Thompson, Emma Sowden and Liang Yang.

We had a total of 4 employees and 1 paid contractor:

- Our Parent Participation Co-ordinator has continued to organise our events brilliantly, minutes our meetings and is a point of contact for families and service providers alike. She also arranges speakers for groups of parent carers at schools.
- Our Youth Forum administrator was employed until 31st August 2024 and did a great job of organising events for our SEND Youth Forum, Special United. On 1st September 2024, Me2 Club redeployed this staff member when they took over the contract to run Special United but she has since been made redundant as Brighter Futures for Children's contract was insufficient to cover an administrator's salary.

- We contract an excellent self-employed bookkeeper.
- We employed two project workers from 13 August 2024 to 31 March 2025 on fixed term contracts, specially to support the phase 1 of the PINS Project (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in (primary) Schools)

REVIEW OF OUR WORK April 2024 – March 2025

RFF exists to coproduce local services for children and young people with SEND and their families. To do this, we work hard to reach as many parents as possible and to represent their views in local services for children with SEND and their families. We have 6 current Trustees and met as a Trustee board 6 times in the last financial year.

Our membership has grown to 425 and we now have 994 followers on Facebook.

RFF held 3 coffee evenings for parent carers to meet up and talk to service providers including: Adult Social Care, Mental Health Support Team, and the RISE team (Reading Inclusion Support in Education).

We took part in a Health Engagement Day in June 2024, held our Transition Information Day on 23 November 2024 and our Information and Fun Day on 28 September 2024.

Our annual conference had to be postponed from March 2025 to June 2025, and so will be included in the next year's annual report.

Representing Families' Views

RFF held 6 Forum meetings with local services, sharing parent carers' views on local services. We continued to sit on the now bi-monthly SEND strategy group meetings.

We sat on the 5 work strands that are part of the SEND Strategy Board's work until September 2024, when we decided to reprioritise our attendance at meetings due to the very limited capacity we have to attend. We decided to focus on the board meetings and the Preparing for Adulthood strand as this still required a lot of work.

RFF has continued to be part of the Autism Strategy Board and have fed back parent carer and young people's views.

We began meeting with the Designated Clinical Officer for SEND (DCO) for regular Keeping in Touch meetings alongside the Wokingham and West Berks parent carer forums and joined the

Integrated Care System Children's Board with health and Local Authority managers, alongside parent carer forums across Bucks, Oxon and the west of Berkshire.

We worked with service managers on the following issues that families have raised with us:

- School transport, especially the confusion around school transport at the end of the summer term and start of the Autumn term 2024 and the issues with post 18 school transport. The system for organising school transport was reviewed and the post 16 school transport policy is being reviewed in the coming months.
- Preparing for Adulthood and the sudden ending of education for a number of families in the Autumn term 2024. There was some improvement and acknowledgment that a move from education to social care provision required a clear process and time for families to appeal.
- The changes to the referral route for autism and ADHD assessments. We haven't been able to stop the changes requiring at least 6 months of support before a referral but some communication has improved.

Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)

RFF continued to meet with the PINS steering group fortnightly (from January 2024) until the end of March 2025 and completed phase 1 of the PINS project. This included offering parent carers of SEND children in primary schools 5 opportunities to meet with each other and 4 meetings to represent parent carer views with headteachers. Parent carers took part in creating an artwork, which they chose as their legacy project. We are now completing Phase 2 of the project which will end in March 2026.

Reading's SEND Youth Forum, Special United

Special United met face to face twice between April 2024 and the end of August 2024. During this time, young people made a video about transitions with the Integrated Care Board. Me2 Club applied for the contract from Brighter Futures to run the SEND youth forum, after RFF decided to step back. We attended the first Me2 Club session with Special United to assist in the transition. Our Youth Forum Administrator worked with Me2 Club for a month to support the transition but was made redundant at the end of September 2024 as a result of changes to the way Brighter Futures funded Special United. RFF budgets for redundancy costs of staff who are employed on fixed term projects, and was able to pay the cost of the project worker's redundancy to Me2 Club in order for Me2 Club to be able to take over the Youth Forum contract.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Although the forum has increased its membership, and has some new steering group members, trustees are aware of the need to recruit more trustees, particularly parent carers of younger children. The current trustees have children at the older end of our age range and are therefore more likely to be moving on in the coming year. Without new trustees, the forum will struggle to continue.

FINANCIAL REVIEW AND RESERVES POLICY

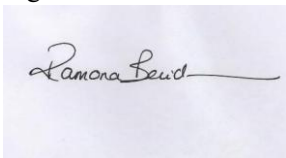
Reading Families Forum receives an annual government grant administered by the charity Contact to facilitate parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and for several years has had a contract from Brighter Futures for Children to run Special United, the SEND youth forum. This contract ended on 31st August 2024. We also received £40,000 from NHS BOB ICB to run phase 1 of the PINS project between August 2024 and March 2025. These funds are held as restricted funds, to be spent on these specific projects.

Because our income during the financial year was over £25,000, the charity commission require an independent examination of the accounts. This was the first time that our income was over this threshold since the charity was formed, and we do not expect to receive this level of income as a matter of routine. RFF is very grateful to Rachel Eden of Holybrook Associates who has undertaken the independent examination, and her report is attached.

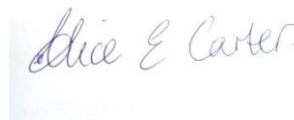
We made it clear to BOB ICB when receiving the PINS funding that we only expected to be able to spend a limited amount of the £40,000 during phase 1. They have asked us to carry over unspent money to phase 2 of PINS, and we will be discussing arrangements for the remaining unspent funds during 2025-26 as we are unlikely to be able to spend this all on PINS or on other work. RFF opened a deposit account with our bank, the Co-operative Bank, in order to earn interest on these funds while we are holding them.

Brighter Futures for Children covered the additional costs of employing staff at the end of the Special United contract and the Special United restricted fund ended with a zero balance. The PINS restricted fund stood at £21,306 at the end of the financial year, and we had £3,487 in unrestricted funds, which are essential to be able to keep the forum running while awaiting the results of grant applications and to cover general overheads arising from employing staff.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



Ramona Bridgman, Chair
5/11/25



Alice Carter, Treasurer
5/11/25

Receipts and Payments Accounts 2024-25	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (Youth Forum)	Restricted fund (PINS)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2024-25	Total 2023-24
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts						
Contact grant	0	0	0	16,719	16,719	17,394
Brighter Futures contract	0	1,827	0	0	1,827	6,430
BOB ICB - PINS funding	0	0	40,000	0	40,000	0
Other	147	0	0	0	147	344
Total receipts	147	1,827	40,000	16,719	58,693	24,168
Payments						
Public Events	0	0	0	4,009	4,009	6,628
Steering group / parent carer costs	0	0	0	3,320	3,320	1,064
Staffing and administration costs (note 1)	0	0	0	8,582	8,582	8,530
Resources (including website)	0	0	0	1,008	1,008	615
PINS	0	0	18,694	0	18,694	0
Youth Forum	675	2,477	0	0	3,152	6,593
Total payments	675	2,477	18,694	16,920	38,766	23,430
Surplus (Deficit)	(528)	(651)	21,306	(201)	19,927	738
Net movement in funds	(528)	(651)	21,306	(201)	19,927	738
Brought forward at 1/4/2024	4,014	651	0	722	5,387	4,649
Transfer between funds	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carried forward at 31/3/2025	3,487	0	21,306	521	25,314	5,387
Statement of Assets and Liabilities	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (Youth Forum)	Restricted fund (PINS)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2024-25	Total 2023-24
Cash at bank and in hand (note 2)	3,487	0	21,306	521	25,314	5,387
Assets retained for charity's use	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liabilities (note 3)	0	0	0	213	213	0
Total assets less liabilities	3,487	0	21,306	308	25,100	5,387

Note 1. This heading includes core staff costs (Parent Participation Co-ordinator, Bookkeeper). Costs of project staff (Special United, PINS) are included in the spend on these projects.

Note 2. Total cash held at 31.3.25: Co-operative Bank Current Account £666, Co-operative Bank Deposit Account £24,647.

Note 3. £213 of the 2024-25 Contact grant spend did not clear the bank account until 1st April so is included here as a liability. This cost will be included in 2025-26 expenditure.



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Reading Families Forum CIO

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31 MARCH 2025

Charity no

1166585

Set out on pages

1-3

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect,:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

6th November 2025

Name:

Rachel Eden

Give here details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

READING FAMILIES' FORUM CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1166585

Accounts



Reading Families' Forum CIO

Annual Report and Accounts

2023/2024

Reading Families' Forum Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Trustees' Annual Report for the financial year 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Full name of the charity:

Reading Families' Forum Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Other names charity is known by:

RFF, Reading Families' Forum

Registered charity number:

1166585

Charity commission contact:

Ramona Bridgman
5 Carisbrooke Close
Caversham
Reading RG4 6SB

Charity's governing document:

The constitution of Reading Families' Forum CIO, dated 4 March 2016.

How the charity is constituted:

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

How trustees are appointed:

Elected at the AGM by members but may be co-opted by the other Trustees in between AGMs.

Trustees of the charity:

For the year 2023 / 2024 the following were trustees:

Ramona Bridgman	Chair
Lynsey McDonald	Secretary
Alice Carter	Treasurer
Pauline Hamilton	
Fozia Kayani	(from September 2023)
Kira Lloyd	(from November 2023)
Sergio de Gregorio	(from January 2024)

Bank:

The Co-operative Bank, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M4 4BE.

Objects of the charity:

To relieve the needs of young people aged 0-25 years with disabilities and / or special educational needs and to assist in advancing them in life so that they may grow to full maturity

as individuals and members of society for the public benefit in the Reading Borough Council area by:

- setting up structures and providing opportunities (surveys, meetings, events, information days) to facilitate two-way communication between families and service providers;
- promoting and implementing co-production in decision making and planning for future service provision, so that parents and carers can contribute to improvements in services;
- promoting the sharing of best practice, informed by statutory and voluntary agencies within health, education, social care and disability.

Main activities undertaken:

Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. RFF holds regular Forum meetings where members and service providers meet to discuss issues of concern. RFF holds regular public events, including coffee evenings with a speaker, an annual Information Day, an annual Preparing for Adulthood Day, and a public conference. RFF members represent parents on a variety of committees and working groups within the local authority, and work regularly with key service providers in the Local Authority, NHS and voluntary sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Reading Families' Forum has been a charity since 2016, building on our work to promote co-production between families of children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) and service providers for the last 16 years. (Co-production means developing services together.) We have a membership of 402 parent carers and 815 - 908 people follow us on Facebook.

MANAGEMENT

At the last AGM in October 2023 the following trustees were voted in:

- Ramona Bridgman, Chair
- Lynsey McDonald, Secretary
- Alice Carter, Treasurer
- Pauline Hamilton and Fozia Kayani.

Two additional trustees were co-opted since the AGM, Kira Lloyd and Sergio de Gregorio. Fozia Kayani, who was co-opted in September 2023, resigned as a trustee in May 2024 due to work and caring commitments.

We have a number of parent carers who have provided invaluable support over the past year, including Beryl Thompson, Claire Harrison and Liang Yang.

We had 2 employees and 1 paid contractor:

Our Parent Participation Co-ordinator, Fran Morgan, has continued to organise our events brilliantly, minutes our meetings and is a point of contact for families and service providers alike. She also arranges speakers for groups of parent carers at schools.

Lisa Harry was our Youth Forum administrator and did a great job of organising events for our SEND Youth Forum, Special United. On 1st September 2024, Me2 Club redeployed Lisa when they took over the contract to run Special United but has since been made redundant as Brighter Futures for Children's contract was insufficient to cover Lisa's salary.

Tara Robb is an excellent self-employed administrator and does all our bookkeeping.

REVIEW OF OUR WORK April 2023 – March 2024

RFF exists to coproduce local services for children and young people with SEND and their families. To do this, we work hard to reach as many parents as possible and to represent their views in local services for children with SEND and their families.

Our membership has grown by 15% and our number of followers on Facebook has increased by 11% since the last AGM.

We had 3 face to face coffee sessions and one online session between April 23 and March 24 so that parent carers can talk to local service managers and are now giving families the option to join online. We have had the new Keyworking Team, the new Health Visitor for children with additional needs, learning disability CAMHS, ReMap charity, and Reading's Inclusion Support in Education Team (RISE).

We held our Transition Information Day on 18 November 2023 and our Information and Fun Day on 16 September 2023.

We held a conference for parent carers and professionals with Brighter Futures for Children in March 2024 focussing on children's social care.

Representing Families' Views

RFF held 5 Forum meetings with local services. We continued to sit on the monthly SEND strategy group meetings and the 5 work strands that are part of the board's work.

We meet regularly with the Local Offer team to review the information and how it is presented and have met with the SEND team manager to look at improving their communication with parent carers.

RFF attend the SEND Joint Implementation Group with Health, Social Care and Education across the 3 local authority areas: Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire and taken part in two audits of Education, Health and Care Plans across the 3 local authorities.

RFF has been part of the steering group for the new Learning Disability CAMHS.

RFF has been part of the Autism Strategy Board and have fed back parent carer and young people's views.

Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)

Reading has been selected to be part of the PINS programme in all of Reading's mainstream primary schools. RFF have been attending steering group meetings since January 2024 and put together a project plan.

We have since recruited 2 school group coordinators to set up parent carer groups in the 4 clusters of primary schools. They will then help parent carers coproduce work to make schools more inclusive.

Getting our young people's views heard

The Special United Youth Forum met face to face 6 times between April 2023 and March 2024.

Young people helped with the research towards the new Reading Inclusion Support in Education (RISE), learning disability CAMHS and the Keyworking teams. They have given their views on what would make schools more inclusive, supported internships, therapies (physio, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy) and the Local Offer.

Top 3 successes in the last year

We have increased our membership and coopted two new Trustees, Sergio de Gregorio and Kira Lloyd. Kira completed a successful placement with us as part of her degree.

We became involved in the PINS project and regularly worked with the RISE team to improve inclusion in schools.

We have been part of the setting up of the learning disability CAMHS service.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Become a member if you are not already, the more members we have the more influence we have with local services. You can also vote for who you want to be a Trustee and Chair.

Become part of the steering group. We will support you to become involved in the meetings above. Service managers like to hear from different parent carers rather than just the same old faces!

Become a Trustee and be part of planning our work. We are a friendly, supportive team and make sure we all only do what we are able to do at the time. As our children get older, we are looking for parent carers of younger children as well as more experienced parents.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reading Families Forum receives an annual government grant administered by the charity Contact to facilitate parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and more recently has a contract from Brighter Futures for Children to run Special United, the SEND youth forum. This contract was due to end on 31st March 2024, but was extended for a further 3 months to 30th June 2024. We returned to a full year of in-person events this year, including an Information and Fun Day and Transition Day, a conference on children's social care, and a number of coffee evenings although issues with staffing mean we are unable to provide childcare and this makes it harder to reach as many families. At the end of the year we held just over £4000 in unrestricted funds, which is essential to be able to keep the forum running while awaiting the results of grant applications and to cover general overheads arising from employing staff.

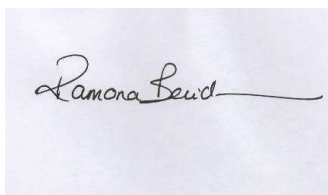
**Receipts and Payments
Accounts 2023-24**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (BFfC Youth Forum Contract)	Restricted fund (Contact Grant)	Total 2023-24	Total 2022-23
	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Contact grant	0	0	17,394	17,394	15,409
Brighter Futures contract	0	6,430	0	6,430	0
Other	344	0	0	344	226
Total receipts	344	6,430	17,394	24,168	15,635
Payments					
Public Events	0	0	6,628	6,628	6,484
Steering group / parent carer costs	0	0	1,064	1,064	342
Staffing and administration costs	0	0	8,530	8,530	9,037
Resources (including website)	0	0	615	615	1,472
School Groups Project	0	0	0	0	0
Youth Forum	0	6,593	0	6,593	5,228
Total payments	0	6,593	16,837	23,430	22,563
Surplus (Deficit)	344	(163)	557	738	(6,928)
Net movement in funds	344	(163)	557	738	(6,928)
Brought forward at 1/4/2023	3,670	814	165	4,649	11,577
Transfer between funds	0	0	0	0	0
Carried forward at 31/3/2024	4,014	651	722	5,387	4,649

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (BFfC Contract)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2023-24	Total 2022-23
Cash at bank and in hand	4,014	651	722	5,387	4,649
Assets retained for charity's use	0	0	0	0	0
Liabilities	0	0	0	0	404
Total assets less liabilities	4,014	651	722	5,387	4,244

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



Ramona Bridgman, Chair
12/10/2024

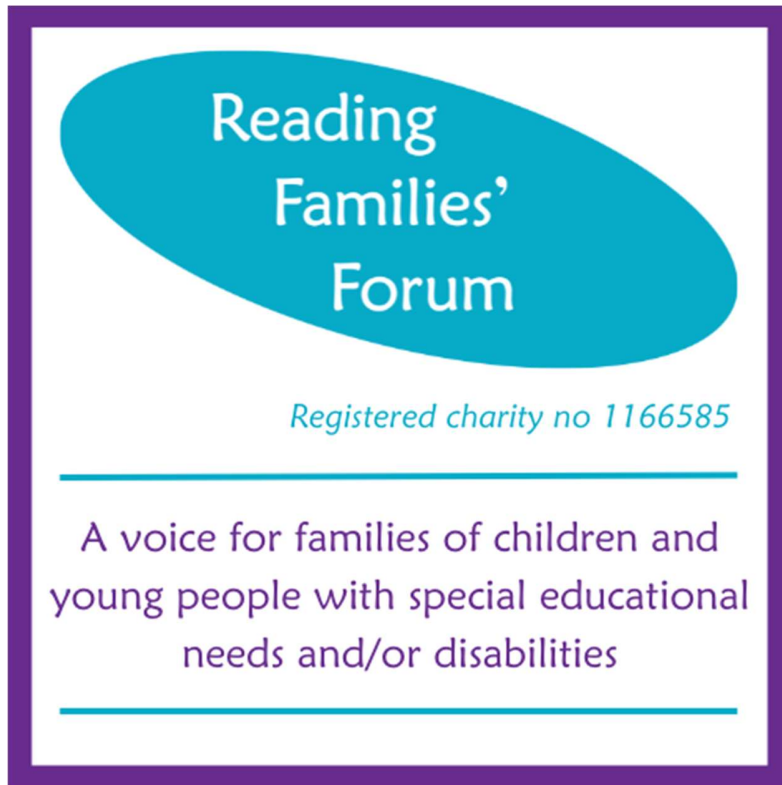


Alice Carter, Treasurer
19/10/2024

READING FAMILIES' FORUM CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1166585

Accounts



**Reading Families' Forum CIO
Annual Report and Accounts
2022/2023**

Main activities undertaken: Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. RFF holds regular Forum meetings where members and service providers meet to discuss issues of concern. Pre-Covid, RFF organised 6 coffee evenings per year for our members with a speaker (one each term), an annual Information Day, and a public conference. RFF members represent parents on a variety of committees and working groups within the Local Authority, and work regularly with key service providers in the Local Authority, NHS and voluntary sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Reading Families' Forum have been a charity since 2016, building on our work to promote co-production between families of children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) and service providers for the last 16 years. (Co-production means developing services together.) We have a membership of 349 parent carers and 815 people follow us on Facebook.

MANAGEMENT

At the last AGM in October 2022 the following trustees were voted in:

- Lynsey McDonald – secretary
- Alice Carter – treasurer
- Pauline Hamilton & Alison Ries – trustees and our longest serving forum members
- Ramona Bridgman, Chair.

RFF were very sad to have to inform our members that one of our Trustees, Alison Ries, died in May 2023. She was extremely dedicated to giving a voice to families of disabled children and was a good friend. We will all really miss her.

We have a number of parent carers who have provided invaluable support over the past year, including Beryl Thompson and Claire Harrison.

We have 2 employees and 1 paid contractor:

Our Parent Participation Co-ordinator, Fran Morgan, organises our events brilliantly, minutes our meetings and is a point of contact for families and service providers alike. She also arranges speakers for groups of parent carers at schools.

Lisa Harry is our Youth Forum administrator and does a great job of organising events for our SEND Youth Forum, Special United.

Tara Robb is an excellent self-employed administrator and does all our bookkeeping.

REVIEW OF OUR WORK OCT 2022 – SEPT 2023

RFF exist to coproduce local services for children and young people with SEND and their families. To do this, we work hard to reach as many parents as possible and to represent their views in local services for children with SEND and their families.

Reaching Families

We have 45 new members, taking our total to 349 members. RFF have attended Fifi's Vision event, a health inequalities event at the Pakistani Community Centre and a Carers' event as well as giving out leaflets in the town centre as part of Reading's first Disability Pride Festival in July. We have also built a brand new website so that we can keep it more up to date with our events.

RFF also have an extra 176 followers on Facebook and have set up a LinkedIn page.

We have had 4 online coffee sessions with between 4 and 9 parent carers. These are open to non-members and members alike so that they can talk to local service managers. We have had the Early Years SEND manager, the children's social care disability team (CYPDT), the new Keyworking Team and the Designated Clinical Officer for children with SEND speak to families. RFF are moving to face to face coffee evenings on 26th September with the new Health Visitor for children with additional needs.

These coffee sessions mean that service managers can hear directly from families about how their services work in practice. We also get to hear from new families.

We held our Transition Information Day on 19th November 2022 attended by 86 families. Our Information and Fun Day was held on 16th September 2023, welcoming 161 members of the public.

We held a conference for parent carers and professionals with eminent speakers: Steve Broach, Ruth Moyse and Brian Grady with the focus of inclusion in education which was attended by 40 people.

Representing Families' Views

RFF held 5 Forum meetings between us and local services. We continue to sit on the monthly SEND strategy group and the 4 work strands that are part of the board's work: early intervention through to specialist provision, consistent approaches to emotional well-being, preparing for adulthood and short breaks.

We meet regularly with the Local Offer team to review the information and how it is presented and have met with the SEND team manager to look at improving their communication with parent carers. We have also met with the Disabled Children's Service Manager twice – the temporary post holder and the new permanent manager.

RFF attend the SEND Joint Implementation Group with Health, Social Care and Education across the 3 LA areas: Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire.

We have been involved in the set up of the new Keyworker scheme for children and young people at risk of admission to a mental health bed or residential setting and helped interview the Manager and one of the Keyworkers.

RFF are now part of the steering group for the new LD CAMHS and have let commissioners know of families' views regarding the PBS training. This is no longer being promoted in Reading.

We have also met with Reading Borough Council about setting up resources for children out of school and are part of the Inequalities working group.

RFF are also part of the Autism Strategy Board and have fed back parent carer and young people's views for the one year review of the Autism Strategy.

Two families have contacted us about issues regarding SEND Tribunals and data protection. We have taken legal advice about these issues and are about to survey our families to see how many families are experiencing this. We have raised the issues with the Director of Education.

RFF were part of the planning for an EHCP audit across Reading, West Berks and Wokingham and took part in the audit of Wokingham EHCPs.

Getting our young people's views heard

The Special United Youth Forum has met face to face 4 times since the last AGM.

- In October, we met with the Keyworking Team to give young people's views about how the team should run. Young people were particularly keen that support didn't just stop when the piece of work finished.
- In December, No 5 sought young people's views about the new youth hub they are setting up for young people.
- In January, we helped Me2 Club with planning their youth social action work and designed some possible logos for the Keyworking team. One of our Reading young people won the competition with an excellent design.
- In May, young people gave their views about the Delivering Better Value application that Reading are applying for to improve SEND education.
- Later that month, 4 young people and one parent took part in a video for the ICB (local health commissioners) about young people's views about health care.
- In June, we met with Elevate to talk about preparing for college and work. Young people want much more information about reasonable adjustments they can expect.
- Special United is meeting in October 23 to give their views on the new LD CAMHS.

Young people who take part receive a £10 voucher. 32 young people have taken part in Special United in the last year, with 13 attending 2 or more sessions. Brighter Futures for Children have given us a grant to run SU for another year until March 2023.

Successes in the last year

We have increased our membership by nearly 15% and reached over a 200 families at our various events. We have also been able to ensure many families who were struggling with access to social care or mental health care got the support they needed.

We continue to attend 10 different sets of meetings to advocate for disabled children and their families, giving up our time for free. Many services have incorporated families' views especially Reading's Local Offer and the Keyworking team. Following RFF raising issues, the wheelchair service is under review and a few longer short break sessions have been offered.

RFF have coopted a new Trustee who is both a parent carer and an experienced professional.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Become a member if you are not already, the more members we have the more clout we have with local services. You can also vote for who you want to be a Trustee and Chair.

Become part of the steering group. We will support you to become involved in the meetings above. Service managers like to hear from different parent carers rather than just the same old faces!!

Become a Trustee and be part of planning our work. We are a friendly, supportive team and make sure we all only do what we are able to do at the time. As our children get older, we are looking for parent carers of younger children as well as more experienced parents.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reserves policy

Reading Families' Forum has very little unrestricted income because its work is funded by short term grants from the charity Contact and other organisations, which cannot be held as reserves. We have now managed to build up a small reserve from other income and are getting closer to our aim to be able to hold in reserve 3 months' expenditure to allow work to continue while awaiting grant funding.

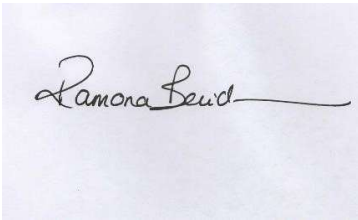
Accounts and Treasurer's Report 2022-23

The accounts for the financial year 2022 / 2023 are attached to this report.

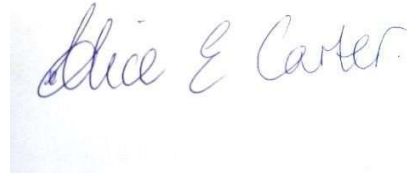
Reading Families Forum receives an annual grant from Contact to facilitate parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and supplements this income by applying for grants from other bodies for specific projects. At the start of 2022-23 our work was still impacted by the continuing pandemic but during the year we gradually returned to in-person events as well as running our conference online. We also developed and launched a new website for the forum. As we did not run a full year of in-person events, our costs were lower than pre-pandemic, despite the impact of inflation, and we had some funds remaining at the end of the year which we were able to spend on infrastructure and funding speakers for school groups. We were also able to commit to continuing to run the Youth Forum Special United while discussions with Brighter Futures for Children took place about future funding arrangements. Brighter Futures agreed to continue to fund us to run Special United for a further year to 31st March 2024 but there will be a tender process for funding the Youth Forum after that date.

During 2022, the forum changed its bank to from HSBC to The Co-operative Bank.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ramona Bridgman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Ramona Bridgman, Chair
06/10/23

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alice E Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Alice Carter, Treasurer
11/10/23

**Receipts and Payments
Accounts 2022-23**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (BFfC 2021)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2022-23	Total 2021-22
	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Contact grant	0	0	15,409	15,409	14,181
Brighter Futures contract	0	0	0	0	10,500
Other	226	0	0	226	13
Total receipts	226	0	15,409	15,635	24,694
Payments					
Public Events	0	0	6,484	6,484	1,466
Steering group / parent carer costs	0	0	342	342	10
Staffing and administration costs	0	0	9,037	9,037	10,206
Resources (including website)	0	0	1,472	1,472	3,727
Youth Forum	0	5,228	0	5,228	4,988
Total payments	0	5,228	17,335	22,563	20,397
Surplus (Deficit)	226	(5,228)	(1,926)	(6,928)	4,298
Net movement in funds	226	(5,228)	(1,926)	(6,928)	4,298
Brought forward at 1/4/2022	3,444	6,042	2,091	11,577	7,280
Transfer between funds	0	0	0	0	0
Carried forward at 31/3/2023	3,670	814	165	4,649	11,577

**Statement of Assets and
Liabilities**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (RBC 2019)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2022-23	Total 2021-22
Cash at bank and in hand	3,670	814	165	4,649	11,577
Assets retained for charity's use	0	0	0	0	0
Liabilities	0	345	59	404	0
Total assets less liabilities	3,670	469	106	4,244	11,577

READING FAMILIES' FORUM CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1166585

Accounts

The logo consists of a teal-colored oval with the text "Reading Families' Forum" centered inside in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**Reading
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*A voice for families of children and young people with
special educational needs and/or disabilities*

Reading Families' Forum CIO

Annual Report and Accounts

2021 / 2022

with a speaker (one each term), an annual Information Day, and a public conference. RFF members represent parents on a variety of committees and working groups within the local authority, and work regularly with key service providers in the Local Authority, NHS and voluntary sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Reading Families' Forum has been a charity since April 2016, building on our work to promote co-production between families of children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) and service providers for the last 16 years. (Co-production means developing services together.)

In the last year, we have increased our membership from 226 to 304 parent carers and 742 people follow us on social media now compared with 639 people in 2021!

MANAGEMENT

At the last AGM in September 2021 the following trustees were voted in:

- Lynsey McDonald – secretary
- Alice Carter – treasurer
- Pauline Hamilton & Alison Ries – trustees and our longest serving forum members
- Karen O'Leary and Ellie Hunt – new trustees
- Ramona Bridgman, Chair.

Sadly, Ellie had to step down soon after, due to other commitments.

We also have a number of parent carers who provide invaluable support over the past year, including Claire Harrison, Ruth Pearce, Beryl Thompson, Sarah Snow and Liang-I Yang.

All our staff and Trustees have faced huge pressures over the past year, and the Chair really values their commitment to continuing to do what they can for other SEND families.

We have 2 employees and 1 paid contractor:

Our Parent Participation Co-ordinator, Fran Morgan, organises our events brilliantly, minutes our meetings and is a point of contact for families and service providers alike. She also arranges speakers for groups of parent carers at schools and children's centres.

Lisa Harry is our Youth Forum administrator and does a great job of organising events for Special United.

Tara Robb is an excellent self-employed administrator and does all our bookkeeping.

REVIEW OF OUR WORK OCT 2021 – SEPT 2022

We have held 7 online Coffee Sessions attended by about an average of 4 parent carers per session on a variety of topics

1. Deb Hunter, Mental Health Lead.
2. Nikki Stevens, SEND team manager (Now Maggie Buckley)
3. Nina Crispin, RBC on rewrite of the Autism Strategy
4. Fiona Hostler, Children Missing Education Officer
5. Nina Crispin and Amanda Nyeke, RBC reviewing the draft new Autism Strategy
6. Children with Disability Team on updates to the service
7. The new Designated Children's Officer, Miranda Walcott.

We also held a session for parents on the process of applying for an Education, Health and Care Plan and Tribunals in December 2021 and an Information and Fun Day in June that 100 people attended.

Co-Producing Improvements for children/young adults with SEND The Forum continue to sit on the SEND strategy group and 5 work strands that are part of the board's work: communication, early intervention through to specialist provision, consistent approaches to emotional well-being, preparing for adulthood and short breaks. We also attend the Autism Board, the SEND Joint Implementation Group and the Carers' Steering Group.

We meet regularly with the Local Offer team to review the information and how it is presented and have met with MPs and health professionals to try and sort out provision for hydrotherapy.

We have been involved in the set up of the new Keyworker scheme for children and young people at risk of admission to a mental health bed or residential setting, and have helped interview new Keyworker staff.

Getting our young people's views heard The Special United Youth Forum has met online 5 times and once face to face since the last AGM.

1. Deb Hunter regarding mental health
2. Heidi Francis – Keyworker scheme above
3. CAMHS
4. Royal Berks Hospital and draft Autism Strategy
5. Children's Director
6. New SEND Team Manager, Maggie Buckley

Young people who take part receive a £10 voucher.

Special United has made a training video for schools that has been very well received; a piece was written about this in the national publication CYP Now. They have also visited the Royal Berks to advise on accessibility and fed back their views on the Easy Read Transition to Adulthood Guide and the Local Offer refresh.

Other pieces of work that RFF has been involved with since the last AGM

1. Guide to using a Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant for your child has been completed as well as a Guide to Accessing Children's Social Care.
2. An easy read guide to transitions to adulthood.
3. The Local Offer refresh
4. The draft Autism Strategy

We are also in the process of updating our website to make it easier and quicker to add new information and events.

We have held a parent carer survey to gain feedback from families. Parent carers and young people with additional needs have raised a number of issues regarding local services, including:

- Current short breaks are very good but there are not enough sessions or long enough to give parents enough of a break and some children the level of stimulation they need. There also needs to be some more sessions for those who don't like performing or sport. The Lego Club is a good start with this. RFF has made The Children's Disability Service aware.
- Long waits for autism and ADHD assessments – additional funding has been made available but there continues to be long waits.
- There has been a significant increase in SEND children missing education due to anxiety, with huge impacts for the children and their families. The school improvement team are training school staff, using the video made by young people themselves, but there is a way to go in some schools.
- There is a lack of hydrotherapy for physically disabled children and adults, long waits for wheelchair equipment and repairs and long waits for OT assessments in the home. This all has significant impacts on children's physical health and that of their carers. RFF have raised this at the JIG several times.
- Families have raised concerns about how the LA legal team respond when a parent appeals to Tribunals. We are seeking legal advice in this regard and have discussed with the LA.

- Access to mental health support is very challenging with long waits and different referral criteria. This has meant that some children with SEND fall through the gaps. A Learning Disability CAMHS will be set up in the next year and RFF are working with other providers to ensure a joined up service.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Become a member if you are not already, the more members we have the more influence we have with local services. All parents or other family carers of children and Young People up to age 25 living in the Reading Borough Council area are eligible to join and membership is free. Members elect our trustees and choose the chair, secretary and treasurer.
- Become part of the steering group. We will support you to become involved in the meetings with service providers to let them know what families need. Service managers like to hear from different parent carers rather than just the same old faces!!
- Become a Trustee and be part of planning our work. We are a friendly, supportive team and make sure we all only do what we are able to do at the time. As our children get older, we are looking for parent carers of younger children as well as more experienced parents.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reserves policy

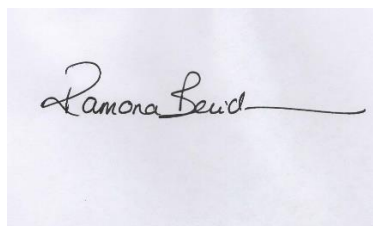
Reading Families' Forum has very little unrestricted income because its work is funded by short term grants from the charity Contact and other organisations. These grants cannot be held as reserves. We have now managed to build up a small reserve and are getting close to our aim to be able to hold in reserve 3 months' expenditure to allow work to continue while awaiting grant funding.

Accounts and Treasurer's Report

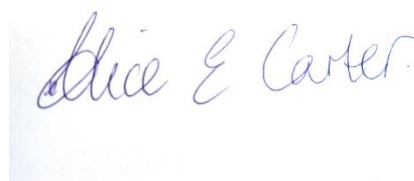
The accounts for the financial year 2021 / 2022 are attached to this report.

Reading Families Forum receives an annual grant from the charity Contact to support parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and from time to time we also apply for grants from other organisations to fund specific projects. In 2021-22 our work was heavily impacted by the continuing pandemic and we held all our events online. This meant that we were able to spend some of the money we would have otherwise spent on events on infrastructure and equipment and on a parent carer survey which will inform our work in future years. We were also able to continue to run the Youth Forum Special United while waiting for renewed funding from Brighter Futures for Children, which we received in autumn 2021 to run the Youth Forum until March 2023. We have also been able to build up our unrestricted funds to help with running costs while grant applications are pending and to cover the increasing costs of running the Forum and employing staff.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



Ramona Bridgman, Chair
5/10/2022



Alice Carter, Treasurer
5/10/2022

Receipts and Payments Accounts 2021-22	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (BFfC 2019)	Restricted fund (BFfC 2021)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2021-22	Total 2020- 21
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts						
Contact grant	0	0	0	14,181	14,181	13,415
Brighter Futures contract	500	0	10,000	0	10,500	0
Other	13	0	0	0	13	0
Total receipts	513	0	10,000	14,181	24,694	13,415
Payments						
Public Events	0	0	0	1,466	1,466	140
Steering group / parent carer costs	0	0	0	10	10	283
Staffing and administration costs	0	0	0	10,206	10,206	7,436
Resources (including website)	0	0	0	3,727	3,727	0
School Groups Project	0	0	0	0	0	0
Youth Forum	0	1,029	3,958	0	4,988	4,570
Total payments	0	1,029	3,958	15,409	20,397	12,430
Surplus (Deficit)	513	(1,029)	6,042	(1,228)	4,298	985
Net movement in funds	513	(1,029)	6,042	(1,228)	4,298	985
Brought forward at 1/4/2021	2,932	1,029	0	3,319	7,280	6,295
Transfer between funds	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carried forward at 31/3/2022	3,444	0	6,042	2,091	11,577	7,280

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (RBC 2019)	Restricted fund (RBC 2019)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2021-22	Total 2020-21
Cash at bank and in hand	3,444	0	6,042	2,091	11,577	7,280
Assets retained for charity's use	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total assets less liabilities	3,444	0	6,042	2,091	11,577	7,280

Treasurer's Report 2021-22

Reading Families Forum receives an annual grant from Contact to facilitate parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and supplements this income by applying for grants from other bodies for specific projects. In 2021-22 our work was heavily impacted by the continuing pandemic and we held all our events online. This meant that we were able to spend some of the resources we would have otherwise spent on events on infrastructure and on a parent carer survey which will inform our work in future years. We were also able to continue to run the Youth Forum Special United while waiting for renewed funding from Brighter Futures for Children, which we received in autumn 2021 to run the Youth Forum until March 2023. We have also been able to build up our unrestricted funds a little to help with running costs while grant applications are pending and to cover the increasing costs of running the Forum and employing staff.

READING FAMILIES' FORUM CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1166585

Accounts

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**Reading
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Reading Families' Forum CIO

Annual Report and Accounts

2020 / 2021

Reading Families' Forum CIO

Trustees' Annual Report for the financial year 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

<i>Full name of the charity:</i>	Reading Families' Forum CIO										
<i>Other names charity is known by:</i>	RFF, Reading Families' Forum										
<i>Registered charity number:</i>	1166585										
<i>Charity commission contact:</i>	Ramona Bridgman 5 Carisbrooke Close Caversham Reading RG4 6SB										
<i>Charity's governing document:</i>	The constitution of Reading Families' Forum CIO, dated 4 March 2016										
<i>How the charity is constituted:</i>	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)										
<i>How trustees are appointed:</i>	Elected at the AGM by members.										
<i>Trustees of the charity:</i>	For the year 2020 / 2021 the following were trustees: <table><tr><td>Ramona Bridgman</td><td>Chair</td></tr><tr><td>Lynsey McDonald</td><td>Secretary</td></tr><tr><td>Alice Carter</td><td>Treasurer</td></tr><tr><td>Pauline Hamilton</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Alison Ries</td><td></td></tr></table>	Ramona Bridgman	Chair	Lynsey McDonald	Secretary	Alice Carter	Treasurer	Pauline Hamilton		Alison Ries	
Ramona Bridgman	Chair										
Lynsey McDonald	Secretary										
Alice Carter	Treasurer										
Pauline Hamilton											
Alison Ries											
<i>Bank:</i>	HSBC, 26 Broad Street, Reading RG1 2BU										
<i>Objects of the charity:</i>	To relieve the needs of young people aged 0-25 years with disabilities and / or special educational needs and to assist in advancing them in life so that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society for the public benefit in the Reading Borough Council area by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• setting up structures and providing opportunities (surveys, meetings, events, information days) to facilitate two-way communication between families and service providers;• promoting and implementing co-production in decision making and planning for future service provision, so that parents and carers can contribute to improvements in services;• promoting the sharing of best practice, informed by statutory and voluntary agencies within health, education, social care and disability.										
<i>Main activities undertaken:</i>	Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. RFF holds regular Forum meetings where members and service providers meet to discuss issues of concern. RFF organises 6 coffee evenings per year for our members with a speaker (one each term), an annual Information Day, and a public conference. RFF members represent parents on a variety of										

committees and working groups within the local authority, and work regularly with key service providers in the Local Authority, NHS and voluntary sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Reading Families' Forum have been a charity since April 2016, building on our work to promote co-production between families of children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) and service providers for the last 16 years. (Co-production means developing services together.) We have a membership of 226 parent carers and 639 people follow us on Facebook which is over 90 more than last year! We reached a further 91 parent carers who are not members with our weekly emails during the year.

MANAGEMENT

At the last AGM in September 2020 the following trustees were voted in:

- Lynsey McDonald – secretary
- Alice Carter – treasurer
- Pauline Hamilton & Alison Ries – trustees and our longest serving forum members
- Ramona Bridgman, Chair.

We have a number of parent carers who have provided invaluable support over the past year, including Ruth Pearse and Liang – I Yang.

We have 2 employees and 1 paid contractor:

Our Parent Participation Co-ordinator, Fran Morgan, organises our events brilliantly, minutes our meetings and is a point of contact for families and service providers alike. She also arranges speakers for groups of parent carers at schools and children's centres.

Lisa Harry is our Youth Forum administrator and does a great job of organising events for Special United.

Tara Robb is an excellent self-employed administrator and does all our bookkeeping.

REVIEW OF OUR WORK OCT 2020 – SEPT 2021

We have held 7 online coffee sessions attended by about 5 parent carers per session:

- Deb Hunter, Mental Health Lead attended to discuss how best to improve mental health for Reading children.
- Karen O'Leary, RBH Practice Developer, attended to hear what children and young people need at the Royal Berks.
- KIDS Mediation came to discuss the new mediation service for Reading.
- Nikki Stevens, new SEND team manager, came to hear parent carers' views.
- Paul Gresty, Education Strategic Lead, heard parents' views on what new school SEND provision needed capital investment. Post 19 colleges for young people with complex needs are lacking in Reading as well as a resource for children with physical disabilities. The Forum are continuing to raise the need for both in Reading.
- Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust attended to discuss the neurodiversity service (autism and ADHD), which is now separate from CAMHS, and hear families' views.
- Parenting Special Children gave a talk on managing aggressive behaviour in our children.

The Forum have attended transition workshops as part of the new Berkshire West Autism and ADHD service. We also held a number of coffee mornings online for Brookfields School with West Berks Parent Carer Forum. We have decided not to continue with the latter but the school has agreed to promote our coffee mornings/evenings for all Reading parents.

We postponed our hoped-for Transition Information Day and Information and Fun Day due to Covid.

Together with Parenting Special Children, we held an online **Preparing for Adulthood Transition conference** on 1st July, attended by at least 48 people per session.

Co-Producing Improvements for children/young adults with SEND The Forum continue to sit on the SEND strategy group and the 6 work strands that are part of the board's work: communication strategy, early intervention through to specialist provision – which we co-chair – consistent approaches to emotional well-being, preparing for adulthood, short breaks and preparing for the CQC inspection. We also attend the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Carers' Steering Group.

We meet regularly with the Local Offer team to review the information and how it is presented and have met with the SEND team manager to look at improving their communication with parent carers.

The Forum was also part of meetings with both Reading MPs and the Royal Berks Hospital regarding the closure of the hospital hydrotherapy pool and have been in correspondence with the CCG about their decision to only fund hydrotherapy if there is an Individual Funding Request. We are still waiting for the hospital's response.

We attend the SEND Joint Implementation Group with Health, Social Care and Education across the 3 LA areas covered by Berkshire West CCG: Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire.

The Forum has had meetings with the lead councillor for culture, heritage and recreation and the council parks and leisure team regarding the accessibility of local playgrounds and have fed back to them regarding the accessibility of the 2 new swimming pools planned for Reading.

We have been involved in the set-up of the new Keyworker scheme for children and young people at risk of admission to a mental health bed or residential setting, and the Dynamic Support Register which has just started in Reading, West Berks and Wokingham.

We are part of the Autism Strategy Board and have fed back parent carer and young people's views about what needs improving for autistic children and young people in Reading for the long awaited Autism strategy.

We have been in regular contact with Berkshire West CCG, Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children to ensure that families' concerns about covid-19 have been heard, particularly around PPE for carers, respite provision during lockdowns and vaccinations. We have sent a weekly mailout with useful information to all our members and some non-members who have requested it, to try to keep people informed, and this has also been distributed by the council Disability Information Service to the several hundred people on their mailing list.

Getting our young people's views heard

The Special United Youth Forum has met online 8 times since the last AGM.

- In November, we had Elevate come to talk to young people about college and employment options
- In December, we met the new SEND team manager Nikki Stevens and young people gave their views on EHCPs
- In January, the Director of Children's Services and her colleagues heard young people's views about what it was like to have additional needs in Reading
- In April, a Senior Mental Health Practitioner from Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust talked to young people about maintaining their mental wellbeing
- In May, Deb Hunter and the Primary Mental Health Team Manager heard young people's views about the new Autism Growth Project

- In June, the Information, Advice and Support Team for SEND talked to young people about the service they offer and what young people would like to see
- Later in June, young people met with the Ofsted/CQC inspectors to give their views about support for children and young people with SEND in Reading
- In July, young people met with a video company to plan the training video we have been funded to produce for teachers and other professionals.

Young people who take part receive a £10 voucher.

Pieces of work that we have been involved with since the last AGM

- The equipment policy for children in mainstream early years, schools and colleges was completed. This makes it clear which body is responsible for providing equipment at home, school and in the community for all disabled children across the west of Berkshire.
- Information about parent carer needs assessment is clearer on the Brighter Futures' website and we understand that there are fewer delays in Brighter Futures picking up work from the carers' hub TuVida.
- The new guide to using a Direct Payment to employ a PA for your child is complete and awaiting publication.
- The SEND guide to transitions to primary schools for families and professionals was finished.
- We helped the Children and Young Peoples Disability Team update their referral criteria – you no longer need a diagnosis, and it applies to autistic children as well as to children with other conditions.
- We completed a survey of young people about the support they want when diagnosed with autism and/or put on the waiting list for an autism assessment.
- We helped Brighter Futures set up short breaks for the October and December school holidays, which are now regular activities. The Forum are still pushing for more short breaks, including for those with more complex needs. We are expecting the short breaks to improve from October half-term with year-long grants for providers.

JOINT OFSTED/CQC SEND INSPECTION

This took place in June 2021. While the inspection was positive overall, it made it clear that there is real frustration with families having to fight for services for their child and feeling left without support.

The inspectors also highlighted

- the lack of provision for young people aged 18+ and how stressed parent carers were
- the need to get better at identifying children with additional needs before they start nursery or preschool
- the need to reduce the waits for Autism and ADHD assessments
- the need to make health pathways easier to understand.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Become a member if you are not already; the more members we have the more clout we have with local services. All parents or other family carers of children and Young People up to age 25 living in the Reading Borough Council area are eligible to join and membership is free. Members elect our trustees and choose the chair, secretary and treasurer.
- Become part of the steering group. We will support you to become involved in the meetings above. Service managers like to hear from different parent carers rather than just the same old faces!!
- Become a Trustee and be part of planning our work. We are a friendly, supportive team and make sure we all only do what we are able to do at the time. As our children get older, we are looking for parent carers of younger children as well as more experienced parents.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reserves policy

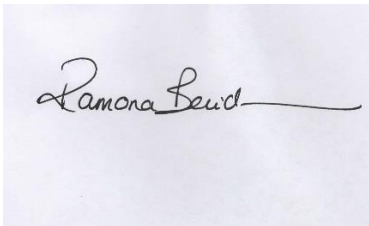
Reading Families' Forum has very little unrestricted income because its work is funded by short term grants from the charity Contact and other organisations. These grants cannot be held as reserves. We have now built up a small reserve and would like to increase this to cover 3 months' expenditure to allow work to continue while awaiting grant funding.

Accounts and Treasurer's Report

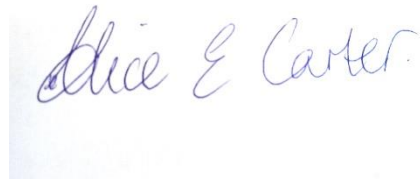
The accounts for the financial year 2020 / 2021 are attached to this report.

Reading Families Forum receives an annual grant from Contact to facilitate parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and supplements this income by applying for grants from other bodies for specific projects. Our 2020-21 programme of events was severely impacted by the global pandemic meaning that we had to move all our events online. We therefore did not spend the whole of our Contact grant funding, but were able to use some of the underspend to cover ongoing costs of the Youth Forum, Special United, to extend the original funding from RBC while awaiting renewal of this grant. We carried forward £136 from the Contact 2019-20 grant which has been transferred to unrestricted funds, but the underspend on the Contact 2020-21 grant of £3319 cannot be carried forward and will be deducted from our 2021-22 Contact grant.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



Ramona Bridgman, Chair
17/9/2021



Alice Carter, Treasurer
17/9/2021

Receipts and Payments Accounts 2020-21	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (BFfC 2019)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2020-21	Total 2019- 20
	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Contact grant	0	0	13,415	13,415	15,000
Total receipts	0	0	13,415	13,415	15,000
Payments					
Public Events	(100)	0	240	140	7,193
Steering group / parent carer costs	156	0	127	283	1,357
Staffing and administration costs	0	0	7,436	7,436	4,151
Resources (including website)	0	0	0	0	1,478
School Groups Project	0	0	0	0	1,158
Youth Forum	0	1,570	3,000	4,570	5,121
Total payments	56	1,570	10,804	12,430	20,456
Surplus (Deficit)	(56)	(1,570)	2,611	985	(5,456)
Net movement in funds	(56)	(1,570)	2,611	985	(5,456)
Brought forward at 1/4/2020	2,852	2,600	844	6,295	11,751
Transfer between funds	136	0	(136)	0	0
Carried forward at 31/3/2021	2,932	1,029	3,319	7,280	6,295

Statement of Assets and Liabilities	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (RBC 2019)	Restricted fund (Contact)	Total 2020-21	Total 2019- 20
Cash at bank and in hand	2,932	1,029	3,319	7,280	6,295
Assets retained for charity's use	0	0	0	0	0
Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
Total assets less liabilities	2,932	1,029	3,319	7,280	6,295