



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

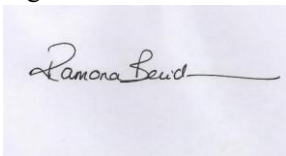
Reading Families Forum receives an annual government grant administered by the charity Contact to facilitate parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and for several years has had a contract from Brighter Futures for Children to run Special United, the SEND youth forum. This contract 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

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

FCMA (Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants)

Address:

Holy Brook Associates

Curious Lounge, 1st Floor, Pinnacle Building, Tudor Road, Reading

RG1 1NH

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

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