



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

Reading Families' Forum CIO

Trustees' Annual Report for the financial year 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

<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 but may be coopted by the Trustees in between AGMs.
<i>Trustees of the charity:</i>	For the year 2022 / 2023 the following were trustees: Ramona Bridgman Chair Lynsey McDonald Secretary Alice Carter Treasurer Pauline Hamilton Alison Ries
<i>Bank:</i>	The Co-operative Bank, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP
<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.

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.

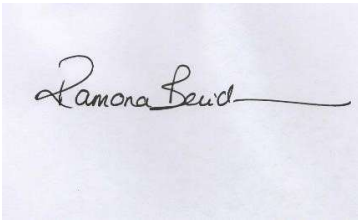
Accounts and Treasurer's Report 2022-23

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

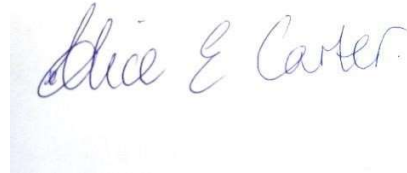
Reading Families Forum receives an annual grant from Contact to facilitate parent carer participation in the Reading Borough Council area, and supplements this income by applying for grants from other bodies for specific projects. At the start of 2022-23 our work was still impacted by the continuing 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 photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink on a white background. The signature reads "Ramona Bridgman" in a cursive script.

Ramona Bridgman, Chair
06/10/23

A photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink on a white background. The signature reads "Alice E Carter" in a cursive script.

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