



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.

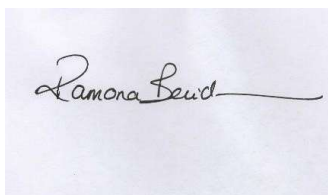
**Receipts and Payments
Accounts 2023-24**

	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