



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

MINUTES OF AGM, 17th OCT 2023, at Southcote Community Hub and on ZOOM

Attendees:

13 members attended in person and 11 members attended online, taking the total to 24. We were therefore quorate, the minimum being 5% or 18 members. We also welcomed 4 non-members.

Brian Grady, Reading's Director of Education, attended in person. Roxanna Glennon, Head of Service and Strategic Lead for SEND, joined online after the AGM to talk to parent carers.

Apologies:

2 received by members.

Trustees Annual Report

Ramona talked through the Chair's section of the Annual Report, which had been circulated prior to the AGM to all members, detailing the Forum's work in the last year.

The meeting acknowledged the great dedication shown by Alison Ries, a Trustee and founding member of Reading Families' Forum, who sadly died in May this year.

Accounts had been circulated in the Annual Report prior to the AGM. Alice explained the expenditure and accounts.

The meeting voted unanimously to accept the Trustees Annual Report, including the accounts, and to vote in the following Trustees:

www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Registered Charity No. 1166585



Email: info@readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Tel: 07516 185380

Reading Families' Forum

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

Ramona Bridgman	Chair
Alice Carter	Treasurer
Pauline Hamilton	Trustee
Fozia Kayani	Trustee
Lynsey McDonald	Secretary

The Chair drew the AGM to a close and then the meeting talked with Brian Grady and Roxanna Glennon.

Brian lives in Reading and chose to work in Reading following Covid. He acknowledged that there was lots of inequality in Reading, a lot of changes in staff and a lack of sufficiency planning. Brian expects to remain working in Reading until the end of his career.

Brian went through some of the challenges he wants to address for Reading SEND children and young people:

- Reading needs at least one more special school. The Local Authority is currently conducting a strategic asset review of all land and assets and will share this with RFF.
- Mainstream schools to be more inclusive.
- Improving mental health support, including the set up of a learning disability CAMHS.
- Improved support for children and young people with the most complex needs, including improved college places.
- Enablement work is taking place with autistic young people in adult social care.

www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Registered Charity No. 1166585



Email: info@readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Tel: 07516 185380

Reading Families' Forum

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

- The waits for assessments of autism and ADHD are too long. There are 76 children waiting over 2 years, currently, for an ADHD assessment, for example.

Brian has taken over line management of the Early Years department in Brighter Futures for Children.

Members said that it is difficult for single parent carers to work and support their children and the cost of living makes it so much harder if you can't work. We need more jobs within school hours. Brian has taken this to a Reading economic forum and welcomed volunteers to contribute. Sergio volunteered for this.

Fozia advised that there is little training for additional needs in mainstream schools. Roxanna agreed that teachers often have just one hour in their training on SEND.

Another member said they are complex needs category. There is nothing in their EHCP for transition. Member almost wants to volunteer their situation for a case study for enablement of young people.

Roxanna described the new RISE (Reading Inclusion Support in Education) project which is being set up in January 2024 with 14 new members of staff. This is being funded by the national Delivering Better Value programme (DBV). The team will be led by an additional Senior Educational Psychologist and will train and upskill teachers to ensure that all local schools offer a good standard.

RISE will have a data analyst to review the effectiveness of the team and a communications and engagement officer to work all providers, health colleagues and families. RISE will also look at what lessons can be

www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Registered Charity No. 1166585



Email: info@readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Tel: 07516 185380

Reading Families' Forum

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

learnt from other areas such as the SEND inspection in Oxfordshire in July this year. Roxanna will want to hear from us how the this is all working.

Several members said that there needed to be more support and inclusion for children in mainstream schools for children with additional needs, particularly those that have significant needs but not severe enough for special school. There also need to be more opportunities for these children socially as well as academically. Young adults with special needs have a shortage of social clubs and other support for their mental well being, especially girls. They feel isolated and depressed with lack of support.

A number of members said that they wanted more liaison between health, social care and education so that children get the support they need. Services feel siloed at present. Referrals from a GP or school for specialist services takes a long time. SENCos in mainstream schools should provide more support and regular communication with parents and relevant agencies to reduce burden & stress on parents. This can only help our children.

A member said that the SEND team needed tighter policies and procedures. Roxanna said that the RISE team will rewrite the Ordinarily Available document (what all pupils can expect) and the Graduated Response document (the steps to take if a pupil has additional needs). The documents need to be easy for parents to understand and specific about what families can expect.

Another parent said it has taken her nearly 2 years to get anyone to listen to her. Brian and Roxanna are keen to sort this sort of problem, going forward.

www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Registered Charity No. 1166585



Email: info@readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Tel: 07516 185380

Reading Families' Forum

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

Another member advised that parent carers like to be referred to by their names rather than just referred to as Mum or Dad in meetings. It is one example of demonstrating respect for the person.

RB 22/10/23

www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Registered Charity No. 1166585



Email: info@readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Tel: 07516 185380