

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

**Reading  
Families'  
Forum**

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

# **Reading Families' Forum CIO**

## **Annual Report and Accounts**

**2016 / 2017**



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 support communication between families of children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) and service providers for the last 14 years. We have a membership of over 160 parent carers.

## **MANAGEMENT**

At the AGM in December 16 the following trustees were voted in:

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

We also have 3 more parent carers on our steering group helping us co-produce services: Beryl Thompson, Lynsey MacDonald, and Ruth Pearce.

## **We have 2 employees:**

Fran Morgan, Parent Participation Co-ordinator, organises all our events, minutes all our meetings and is a point of contact for families and service providers alike.

Samia Sharif started as our Youth Co-ordinator in January 2017, and has been busy setting up our youth forum.

Tara Robb is self-employed. She runs our Facebook page and does all our book keeping.

Our other self-employed worker, Jacqueline Daly, has helped set up groups of parent carers at schools and children's centres. At the end of March 2017, there were 26 such groups, with 25 affiliated to the Forum.

## **REVIEW OF OUR WORK APRIL 2016 TO MARCH 2017**

**We have set up 6 Coffee Evenings** attended by at least 20 parent carers each:

1. Cllr Tony Jones, the council lead for education, came to hear parent carers' experiences.
2. We gathered views about the impact of CAMHS waiting times on families at one coffee evening and reported back to the CCGs and the Local Authority SEND team. As well as funding for more staff at CAMHS, there are now link workers for each school and training run by the Local Authority.
3. Parenting Special Children gave a talk on understanding and managing anger.
4. One coffee evening was devoted to hearing parent carer views about the planned changes to short breaks funding.
5. Deb Hunter, Principal Educational Psychologist, explained about her service and heard concerns about accessibility of assessments.
6. Sue Briggs and Lesley Chamberlain of Reading IASS gave a talk about getting help for children at school.

**An information day was held in March 2017** at Academy Sport, Reading. 25 families enjoyed numerous stalls, football, circus skills and face painting.

## **Support to parent carer groups**

Ms Morgan has arranged speakers to attend parent carer groups to assist them in lots of aspects of caring for a child with additional needs. We have paid for Parenting Special Children to provide 18 sessions to school groups in the last year.

## **Getting better support for SEND children in schools**

The Forum sit on the SEND strategy group and 10 work streams aimed at implementing the SEND code of practice. We have also met with the children's director to ensure that gaps in services are sorted out.

We attend the SEND Joint Implementation Group with Health, Social Care and Education across the 3 LA areas: Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire. We are currently working on improved ways of purchasing Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy equipment for children.

### **Hydrotherapy Pool**

We were part of the stakeholders' group that met with the Royal Berks Hospital and helped get agreement for the hydrotherapy pool to remain open until a long-term replacement is found.

### **Developing Local Services**

In the last financial year, the Forum co-produced the local Autism Strategy, which was agreed by council members and the Health and Well-Being Board in January 2017.

The Forum have been pushing a rethinking of education provision for SEND children, analysing spend and coming up with numerous suggestions. Five more resources places for autistic children have been created at a mainstream secondary school but we would like more local provision.

### **PARENT/CARER VIEWS ON SERVICES AND WHAT WE ARE DOING**

1. Parents have told us that it has been very difficult to get some schools to agree for an Educational Psychologist assessment, even when their child has been falling behind or had many fixed term exclusions. We have reported this to the children's director and understand some more Educational Psychologists are being appointed.
2. Parents have told us it is sometimes difficult to get support for their child at school without an EHCP/statement, especially if their child hasn't been diagnosed with a condition or is on the waiting list for an assessment at CAMHS. The Clinical Commissioning teams are aware of this and are working with the council in setting up the school link project in 10 schools to see if this improves support and encourages referrals at the right time.
3. Parents have told us that they really value the support of the Independent Advice and Support Service (IASS) and that they have helped get the right support for their child in school.
4. Our biggest request for speakers has been around managing children's behaviour and sleep and we will continue to fund speakers to groups at schools, children's centres and coffee evenings as much as we can. We also organise speakers on other topics such as getting support in school, benefits and the Local Offer.
5. Parents have told us that it takes a long time for Social Workers from the Children and Young People's Disability Team (CYPDT) to return calls and emails and a long time for Social Workers to make an assessment and arrange agreed provision. We have agreed a "Reading Road to Success", a charter for families and CYPDT agreeing response times. We are also meeting with the new Service Manager for CYPDT to review how long assessments and provision are taking.
6. Some parents have told us that it has taken a long time (over a year in some cases) for their child's EHCP to be written up after a conversion from a statement. This is being discussed with the SEN Service Manager.
7. A big concern for many parent carers has been getting support agreed from CYPDT and the council in good time for transitions to further education and to secondary school. There is ongoing discussion between us and the council about this as well as the high number of permanent and fixed term exclusions for children with special needs.

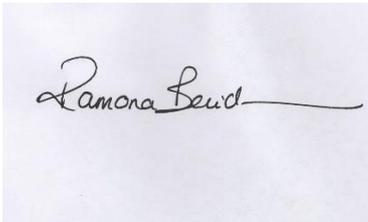
## Financial Review

*Reserves policy:* Reading Families' Forum has very little unrestricted income. RFF's work is funded by short term grants from Contact a Family and other organisations. These grants cannot be held as reserves. Ideally RFF would like to build up a small reserve of up to 3 months' expenditure to allow work to continue while awaiting grant funding, but this will take time.

*Further financial details:* The accounts for the financial year 2016 / 2017 are appended to this report.

Reading Families' Forum receives an annual grant from Contact a Family 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 2016-17 the Forum continued the School Groups project, originally funded by the Council for Disabled Children, and subsequently with a grant from Reading Borough Council. Now school groups and groups in children's centres are established, the Forum will continue to support them. Having begun work to set up a Young People's Forum in 2016, this work continued in the current year. The group have named themselves "Special United" and continue to meet once a term. Additional funding was received from Reading Borough Council towards the end of the financial year to support our work administratively and also to continue our social media presence, and for our work with vulnerable families.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

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

Ramona Bridgman, Chair

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

Alice Carter, Treasurer

<b>Receipts and Payments Accounts 2016-17</b>	<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>Restricted fund (RBC 2014)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (RBC 2016)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (RBC 2017)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (CAF)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (CDC)</b>	<b>Total 2016-17</b>	<b>Total 2015- 16 (corrected)</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Receipts</b>								
Contact a Family grant	0	0	0	0	15,000	0	15,000	15,367
Reading Borough Council grant	0	0	0	5,000	0	0	5,000	10,100
Other income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>25,467</b>
<b>Payments</b>								
Public Events	0	0	0	0	7,482	0	7,482	7,487
Steering group / parent carer costs	0	0	0	0	1,529	0	1,529	1,725
Staffing and administration costs	0	2,358	0	23	7,094	0	9,475	6,813
Resources (including website)	0	0	0	0	1,019	0	1,019	425
Video Project	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,869
Hard to Reach families	0	0	0	48	146	0	194	53
School Groups Project	0	0	2,271	0	0	493	2,764	1,489
Youth Forum	0	0	878	0	0	0	878	0
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,358</b>	<b>3,150</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>17,269</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>23,341</b>	<b>19,861</b>
<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,358)</b>	<b>(3,150)</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>(2,269)</b>	<b>(493)</b>	<b>(3,341)</b>	<b>5,606</b>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,358)</b>	<b>(3,150)</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>(2,269)</b>	<b>(493)</b>	<b>(3,341)</b>	<b>5,606</b>
Brought forward at 1/4/2016	(66)	2,358	10,092	0	2,911	493	15,788	10,182
<b>Carried forward at 31/3/2017</b>	<b>(66)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,942</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,447</b>	<b>15,788</b>

<b>Statement of Assets and Liabilities</b>	<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>Restricted fund (RBC 2014)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (RBC 2016)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (RBC 2017)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (CAF)</b>	<b>Restricted fund (CDC)</b>	<b>Total 2016-17</b>	<b>Total 2015- 16</b>
Cash at bank and in hand	(66)	0	6,942	4,929	642	0	12,447	15,788
Assets retained for charity's use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total assets less liabilities</b>	<b>(66)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,942</b>	<b>4,929</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,447</b>	<b>15,788</b>