

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**

**2018 / 2019**



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 April 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 nearly 200 parent carers.

## **MANAGEMENT**

At the last AGM in September 2018 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.

We also have 2 more parent carers on our steering group helping us coproduce services: Beryl Thompson and Omera Waheed.

### **We have 2 employees and 1 paid contractor:**

Our Parent Participation Co-ordinator, Fran Morgan, organises all our events brilliantly, minutes all 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 and children's centres. There were 27 such groups affiliated to the Forum; 5 groups still keep in touch and we have paid for speakers for them.

Lisa Harry is our new Youth Forum administrator and does a great job of organising events for Special United.

Tara Robb is an excellent self-employed administrator. She runs our Facebook page and does all our bookkeeping.

## **REVIEW OF OUR WORK OCT 18 – SEPT 19**

**We have held 5 Coffee Evenings** attended by at least 15 parent carers each:

1. Sonia Aulak Interim Service Manager for SEND and Si Luker, interim Team Manager for the Children and Young People's Disability Team attended to discuss changes within the disability team. Jane Heath is now the permanent Team Manager and the team is now part of children's social care rather than education.
2. Mark Fowler, Interim Head of Education, and Sonia Aulak attended to discuss education for young people with SEND in February.
3. Deb Hunter, Principal Educational Psychologist and now the permanent SEND Service Manager, attended to talk about the new Mental Health Support Teams in April.
4. Aimee Trimmer, Early Years Advisory Teacher for Special Educational Needs & Disability, Under Fives Service at Brighter Futures for Children and Lynda Bolster, Family Support Worker at Dingley's Promise spoke about sensory needs
5. Maryam Makki and Gill Seagrove attended to talk about the Local Offer in July.

**An information and fun day was held in March 2019** at Academy Sport. 55 families enjoyed numerous stalls, football, Owen's Animals, circus skills and face painting.

**We have held 2 conferences** – for parent carers and professionals – one in October on SEN and one in July regarding social care.

**We have also visited parent carers and young people** at various groups to seek their views: Cranbury Post 16 College, Dingley's Promise drop-in twice and the hearing resource at Westwood Farm School.

### **Support to parent carer groups**

Fran 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 9 sessions to school groups since the last AGM.

### **Co-Producing Improvements for children/young adults with SEND**

The Forum sit on the SEND strategy board and 4 of the 5 work strands that are part of the board's work: data and analysis, early intervention through to specialist provision, preparing for adulthood and short breaks. We also regularly review the Local Offer.

We sat on the interview panels for the new Team Manager and assistant Team Managers for SEN and were part of the stakeholder panel interviewing the permanent Head of Education, Kate Reynolds.

We have also met with the lead councillor for education, Ashley Pearce, and the lead councillor for children's social care, Liz Terry.

We attend the SEND Joint Implementation Group with Health, Social Care and Education across the 3 LA areas: Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire.

The Forum have got involved in the East Reading Adventure Playground Assoc (ERAPA) changes (it had been thought that it would be closed but it will remain open while equipment is working). We have had numerous meetings with RBC councillors and staff to ensure that playgrounds are as accessible as possible for children with a range of disabilities.

### **Getting our young people's views heard**

The Special United Youth Forum has met 5 times since the last AGM.

- In November with Brookfields School talking about supported internships and with Adult Social Care.
- In January with the Reading Community Football Trust and Reading Sport and Leisure
- In February with the Royal Berks Hospital and Healthwatch
- In April with Reading Voluntary Action
- In June with Deb Hunter regarding the Mental Health Support Teams and with Adult Social Care.

All young people who attend received a £10 voucher, plus free food!

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

### **Some families have found it very difficult to get support from social care.**

Carers' Assessments have been delayed for 6 months plus but there is now an agreement that Brighter Futures for Children will conduct assessments of parent carer needs if the child is under 18. Provided the parent is in agreement, the assessment will be combined with the child's assessment of need.

There have also been difficulties for some families in going through the Single Point of Access and getting their disabled child accepted for an assessment.

For others, there have been delays in getting the children in need assessment completed and getting the provision agreed at the end of the assessment.

The Forum and the Local Offer team are working with Brighter Futures to address all of the above.

### **Many parents have reported difficulty getting support for their young person in school and college**

Many have found that school staff don't value their knowledge of their own child and that school support is not co-produced with parents.

Some have found that it is difficult to get an Education, Health and Care needs assessment or an EHC Plan. Many have had to fight through to tribunal before getting an EHCP. There is a new SEN Team Manager and SEND Service Manager and we are working with them on this.

### **Delays in getting Occupational Therapy Equipment**

Some children and young people have had to wait 6 months or more for vital equipment. This is an urgent issue which we have raised with the SEND Joint Implementation Group and it is one of their two top priorities to resolve.

### **YOUNG PEOPLES' VIEWS ABOUT SERVICES AND WHAT WE ARE DOING**

#### **Special United have said that they want:**

- ✓ Accessible sports and leisure centres and parks – they like to do a variety of sports such as fencing, swimming, trampolining.
- ✓ Youth clubs with sessions for young people with additional needs so that they can relax with less noise, dimmer lights and no worries about being bullied.
- ✓ Promises of help at school to be kept to, staff who are supportive and quiet rooms to go to in school when they are stressed.
- ✓ More information about moving to adult social care and colleges, including videos on the Local Offer
- ✓ They also had lots of useful suggestions for the RBH about making the hospital more accessible.

### **FUTURE EVENTS**

Provided the AGM agrees, these are our plans for the next 12 months:

- A Transition Information Afternoon in November (transition to college, work and adult services)
- Information and Fun Day (all ages) in March 2020
- 5 Coffee Eves
- 6 Special United Events
- A conference – topic to be agreed

### **GET INVOLVED**

Are you passionate about improving services for children and young people with special needs? Then come and join the Forum. The Parent Carer Steering Group are a friendly group who support each other. No one is expected to do more than they can. Some parents go to meetings most weeks but some parents attend one or two a term fitting in with school runs and appointments. Everyone's contribution is valued.

### **Financial Review**

#### *Reserves policy:*

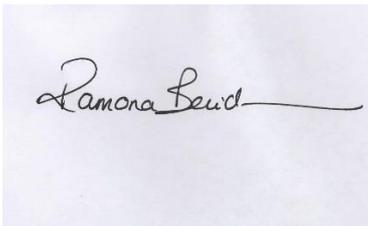
Reading Families' Forum has very little unrestricted income because its work is funded by short term grants from Contact a Family and other organisations. These grants cannot be held as reserves. We hope to be able to build up a small reserve of 3 months' expenditure to allow work to continue while awaiting grant funding, and this year we have been able to transfer some unspent grant money to unrestricted funds towards this.

*Further financial details:*

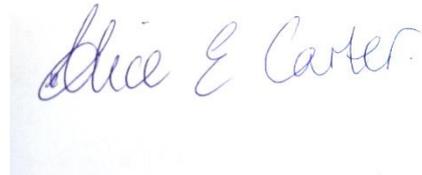
The accounts for the financial year 2018 / 2019 are appended to this report.

Reading Families Forum receives an annual grant from Contact (formerly 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 2018-19 we continued our work with parent carers, funded by our Contact grant, holding coffee evenings and an Information Day, and supporting parent carers to work with service providers on a variety of projects. We were delighted to continue our work with the Youth Forum Special United, holding regular meetings throughout the year, and received an additional £10,000 from RBC to support this work until 2020. We have continued to support the School Groups project, arranging a number of speakers at various groups of SEND parents at Reading schools, funded by a grant from Reading Borough Council in 2016, which still has a small amount left to continue into the rest of 2019. We were pleased that RBC allowed us to transfer the unused funds from our 2017 grant into unrestricted funds, to enable us to finance our general running costs and cover the start of the financial year before the funds from Contact arrive.

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 extending to the right.

Ramona Bridgman, Chair  
17/9/2019

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alice E Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alice Carter, Treasurer  
17/9/2019

**Receipts and Payments  
Accounts 2018-19**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (RBC 2016)	Restricted fund (RBC 2017)	Restricted fund (RBC 2019)	Restricted fund (CAF)	Total 2018-19	Total 2017-18
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>							
Contact a Family grant	0	0	0	0	15,000	15,000	15,000
Reading Borough Council grant	0	0	0	10,000	0	10,000	0
<b>Total receipts</b>	0	0	0	10,000	15,000	25,000	15,000
<b>Payments</b>							
Public Events	0	0	0	0	6,201	6,201	5,472
Steering group / parent carer costs	0	0	0	0	1,285	1,285	1,598
Staffing and administration costs	0	0	406	0	7,372	7,778	9,441
Resources (including website)	0	0	0	0	143	143	162
School Groups Project	0	480	0	0	0	480	1,336
Youth Forum	0	723	0	2,280	0	3,003	3,798
<b>Total payments</b>	0	1,203	406	2,280	15,000	18,889	21,807
<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>	0	(1,203)	(406)	7,720	(0)	6,111	(6,807)
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	0	(1,203)	(406)	7,720	(0)	6,111	(6,807)
Brought forward at 1/4/2018	(66)	1,808	3,876	0	22	5,640	12,447
Transfer between funds	3,470	0	(3,470)	0	0	0	0
<b>Carried forward at 31/3/2019</b>	3,404	605	0	7,720	21	11,751	5,640

**Statement of Assets and  
Liabilities**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund (RBC 2016)	Restricted fund (RBC 2017)	Restricted fund (RBC 2019)	Restricted fund (CAF)	Total 2018-19	Total 2017-18
Cash at bank and in hand	3,404	605	0	7,720	21	11,751	12,447
Assets retained for charity's use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total assets less liabilities</b>	3,404	605	0	7,720	21	11,751	12,447