



FACT (Families and Carers Together) Bucks

**A Charitable Incorporated Organisation Registered in England Number 1155067
Registered Office PO Box 1032, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP22 9NL**

TRUSTEES for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

Kelli EVANS
Margaret NYAMBIO
Penni THORNE
Tracie TWOHIGG
Ruth GOODMAN

Governance and Administration

FACT Bucks is the Parent Carer Forum for Buckinghamshire, as required by the Children and Families Act 2014.

The objects of the Charity are to embed a local, pan disability, parent led parent/carer forum; build parent/carer participation/co-production based on good practice; and share good practice, knowledge and expertise about parent participation to ensure that it continues to grow and strengthen.

The Charity is not able to undertake campaigns, pursue individual cases nor offer support and counselling to individual parent carers.

There are now 550 families on our contact list. Whilst membership is open and free to all those with an interest in the needs of children and young people with SEND, there remains a reluctance to commit. Nevertheless, the Charity seeks to represent all parent carers; makes all its activities open to all parent carers; and accesses the networks of support groups throughout the county to enable greater outreach and feedback.

None of the trustees have resigned their office during the period. The Charity may have up to 12 trustees elected by the AGM. Trustees must be members of the Charity. Under the terms of the Trust, the Trustees have delegated away the day to day administration of the Charity to the Steering Group appointed by them.

The membership of the Steering Group for the period under review has been as follows:-

Andrew HOWARD (Chair and Secretary)
Ruth GOODMAN
Phil OGLEY
Ena SMALE (Admin and Membership Officer)
Penni THORNE (Treasurer)
Kristel van WAUNE (Participation Officer)

The Steering Group aims to meet monthly during term time to manage the Charity; to co-ordinate parent participation; and to plan events. It also meets twice a year with a wider group of parents who represent the Charity on various bodies; twice a year with professionals to facilitate dialogue and encourage co-production; and with representatives of Buckinghamshire Council SEND & Commissioning teams, as well as Bucks SENDIAS to ensure effective co-ordination of activities.

The Charity is a member of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums. We attend regular meetings for our area, discussing various topics matters with other parent carer forums. We provide financial administration for the South East Region and continue to offer support to other forums.

Finance

In the year ending 31st March 2022, the Charity received grants from the Department of Education (through a scheme administered by Contact) and Buckinghamshire Council. Both of these grants are free from commitments to provide any specific services other than to fulfil the task of being the Parent Carer Forum for Buckinghamshire as required under the Children and Families Act. The Trustees will not allow the Charity to be influenced in the manner of its delivery of the Aims of the Charity by any third party. It also received a payment from the South East Region of Parent Carer Forums in respect of its provision of a finance function. It did not undertake any fundraising.

The total income for the period was £22,895.

During the year the Charity expended £22,955

The main items of expenditure were payments to parent carers for their time and expenses in participation and/or co-production; the administration of the Charity; the update and provision of a website; training of parents to participate and the staging of certain events.

The operating deficit for the year was £60

The Charity remains in a positive financial position. Notable expenditure for the year included renewed IT for 2 parent representatives; a series of webinars produced by SENDIAS; and a substantial amount of additional time spent by representatives in relation to the OFSTED/CQC Inspection. Since it was not possible to budget for the latter, the underspend in budgeted expenses to be paid to parent representatives as the majority of meetings have been held remotely during the year was the only reason why the charity did not need to draw from reserves to support this activity.

The Steering Group have resolved that a balance of £8,000 being the equivalent of 4 months expenditure should be held in reserve since the payment of income grants is subject to annual application processes that delay receipt of funds. The remainder of the General Reserve is available to support the work of the Charity.

The Charity has adopted Financial Control, Safeguarding and Equality & Inclusion policies in accordance with best practice guidance from Contact and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums

Activities

The year ending the 31st March 2022 was, once again, anything but routine. In mid February, the Forum and Local Area were informed that OFSTED and the CQC would undertake an Inspection of the provision for SEND in Buckinghamshire beginning on 28th February. Whilst the Inspection had been a possibility since 2016 and that FACT had been involved extensively in the Local Area's discussions in preparation for it, the period leading up to and including the Inspection required the small number of volunteer parent careers to expend significant amounts of time to ensure that the voice of parents was clearly heard.

We committed ourselves to ensure that as many parents as possible were made aware of the opportunity to complete the survey prepared by the Inspectors; to provide parents with a daily updates on the Inspection events; invite any parent who had been involved in any FACT activity in the preceding 2 years to meet one of the Inspectors along with representatives of the parent support groups on the area; and ensure a parent representative was in every meeting with the Inspectors. We can report that all of these tasks were completed in full.

The Inspectors made it clear from our pre visit briefing and throughout the inspection, that they wanted to hear the voice of parents and their lived experience. In every official meeting, the responses of Council and Health representatives were checked with the parent representatives. We must record that the Council were fully supportive of the involvement of the Forum in these meetings and at the introduction meeting we were given the opportunity to report on the most recent SEND survey and alongside other feedback we gave an honest account of the current lived experience of families as well as our reflections on the efforts being made by the Council and Health bodies to address them.

To ensure that we used the opportunity to the maximum effect for the benefit of families and our SEND CYP, we focussed our message on the following Golden Themes:-

Initiatives and pilots are very welcome, but the key is embedded delivery that is available to the majority and reflected in lived experiences

- **Lived Experience** remains poor for too many
- **Staff Retention and Recruitment** in iSEND– new and inexperienced EHCCos leads to poor communication, inconsistency and a dire lack of coproduction and willingness to think creatively
- **Staff Shortages** in Therapies – may be part of a national trend but needs proactive planning to address. Tendency to avoid the problem by deferring until more staff are recruited.
- **Preparing for Adulthood** – strategic recognition needs to extend to developing provision for housing; long term activity options for the less able as well as the more able; a strategic plan to teach independence from early years; and embedded collaborative working to ensure community
- **Neuro divergence** needs to be better understood by listening to neurodivergent people and families, with service response designed to address their lived experience
- **Social Care** – lack of support for families who are struggling until crisis actually occurs; family support offer still focused on parenting not respite; limited understanding of the lived reality of SEND families; little parent engagement at a strategic level
- **School Places** – parent feedback shows that special school places are valued but difficult to find and there remains a lack of provision for key groups and further education options post 16 and post 19.
- **Mainstream Schools**– at OAP and SEN support levels the variation remains too great and this drives the demand for EHC plans and special placements. Telling families to stick it out in mainstream while the provision is improved is unacceptable.
- **Ordinarily Available** provision statements are good for clarity, but they need to be monitored to ensure that they actually exist and the current state of therapies and neuro pathway support hampers its delivery for SEND support and mainstream EHCP CYP

The report of the Inspectors, which has now been published, includes all of them. In addition, the Council and Health bodies received a Written Statement of Action which reflects the most critical areas of inadequate identification and support relating to Therapies; Community Paediatrics and Neurodiversity. The report also makes it clear that in other areas including statutory processes; Vulnerable Children; and Preparing for Adulthood that the initiatives being framed must be implemented at speed to avoid them also being included in another Written Statement of Action when a further inspection occurs most probably in 2024. The Forum will engage fully in the coming year with the process of the preparation of the response to the Written Statement of Action due by early August and more importantly its implementation. The DfE who oversee the response process have already confirmed that they will be seeking the input of the Forum to reflect the impact of the changes.

However significant in terms of activity and impact the Inspection was, it occurred at the end of a very busy year for the Forum. As in the previous year, we began in lockdown and the process of moving out of those restrictions and back to a more normal pattern of operation took the whole period and probably remains incomplete. Nevertheless, the Forum continued to ensure that a parent representative was involved in as many meetings as we received invitations to. The preparation for the inspection process was an element in it but we continued to engage in the oversight and delivery of the SEND Improvement Plan, co-chairing most of the Impact Groups and also Integrated Services Board for SEND. Parent Dialogue Groups for the service areas like CAMHS and Therapies were restarted via Teams and we further invested in a series of webinars in partnership with SENDIAS to help parents grow in confidence both to coproduce their own child or young person's provision and to engage more strategically.

The Chair of the Steering Group holds the role of Chair of the SENDIAS Steering Group and in this capacity worked hard to encourage a review of funding for a service which provides independent support and advice to parents and young people struggling to navigate the SEND system. The review highlighted that the service needed additional funds in comparison with similar services in other areas. As a result of an increased grant from council and health bodies, 2 new full-time advisers, alongside an extended contract for the service leader, means that the service is now available year-round with the aspiration that the extended wait times will be significantly reduced.

As part of the SEND strategy, there is a commitment to seek and respond to the reflections of parents and carers on the SEND provision and process in the County annually through a formal survey. The Charity and Buckinghamshire SENDIAS again worked in partnership to design and deliver this during the first quarter to 2022. 350 eligible families completed the survey but were either ineligible (outside Bucks or young person over 25) or did not answer any questions. The full report including all the additional comments was made public in May and has been shared with colleagues in the Council and Health Service. The overall sentiment of the survey is reflected in the 36% to 44% split between those who think their child is receiving the correct support and those who think that the support is not correct. A further 20% are undecided. The survey was significant in the inspection feedback process and remains a major driver of the SEND improvement journey and there is an intent to offer response to the themes emerging from the parent comments this autumn.

We have participated in national training events for SEND (often the only parent reps); we have attended national and regional National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) events; and we are actively supporting the development of a regional gathering of parent and professional representatives to develop local coproduction at a more strategic regional level.

The Inspectors noted that the Forum is a fully integrated element in the SEND improvement process in Bucks providing clear evidence of the lived experience of parents and their children and young people, as well as honest assessments of the impact of the changes being considered or implemented at a strategic level.

Those parents who represent the Forum and therefore all SEND families do so based on their own lived experience and the feedback received from the survey etc, as well as other parents and parent support groups with whom they have contact. They are not experts in all fields and seek to encourage parents with other lived experiences and expertise to engage whenever possible with the detailed discussions that are ongoing.

Unfortunately, whilst the Charity has a small but very effective Steering Group, we do not have as many parents willing to engage in specific areas as we would like. This places a considerable burden on the small band of willing parents as we attempt to ensure that a parent is present at every opportunity offered to the Forum. If there is not a parent there, it is much easier for others to think we just don't care. As we move ahead, the Act has increased awareness of parent participation (and we hope coproduction) across the Local Area, but these seeds of change can only continue to embed and grow if there are Parent Carers willing to turn up. FACT Bucks offers support and training to all who volunteer. The Council has agreed an increase in our grant to support work specifically aimed at increasing participation and the sustaining of the Forum for the future. This is the priority for the Charity in the year ahead given the age profile of the young people in the families of the majority of the Steering Group.

Public Benefit

We declare that we have had due regard to the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit in exercising our power and duties.

Approved by the Trustees

14th October 2022

Andrew Howard
Secretary

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

At the request of the Trustees, I have examined the receipts and payments account for the year ending 31st March 2022, along with the related paperwork.

In my opinion, the financial statement that follows gives a fair view of the financial activity of the Charity in the year ending 31st March 2022.

Joanne Potts

15th October 2022

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Income and Expenditure 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 – General Fund

	2022 £	Note	2022 £	2021 £	2021 £
Receipts					
Grants – BCC	5,000			5,000	
Grants – DFE	17,495	1		15,000	
Regional Admin	400			400	
Donations	0			350	
					20,750
Payments					
Promotion Costs	(569)			(477)	
Special Events incl AGM	0	2		(2,730)	
Attendance Fees	(7,827)	3		(4,708)	
Travel Costs	(369)			(59)	
Room Hire	0	2		(72)	
Refreshments	(716)			(89)	
Regional Participation	(340)			(390)	
Childcare	0			(20)	
General Admin	(7,920)	3		(6,650)	
Finance Admin	(1,380)			(1,380)	
Audit and Accountancy Fees	(100)			(100)	
Printing	(79)			(408)	
Postage and Carriage	0			(8)	
Telephone	(132)			(23)	
Stationery	0			0	
Website Costs	(344)			(344)	
IT Costs	(1,793)	4		(173)	
Training Costs	(1,200)	2		(100)	
Insurance	(146)			(146)	
Miscellaneous	0			(43)	
			(22,955)		(17,920)
Surplus receipts over payments			(60)		2,830
Reserves brought forward			14,822		11,992
Reserves carried forward			<u>14,763</u>		<u>14,822</u>

Notes

1. The grant available to all Parent Carer Forums was increased to £17,500 from 1st April 2021
2. No face-to-face events were possible during the year, the remainder of the training webinar contract begun in 2020/21 is posted to Training for 2021/22
3. Additional hours relating to the OFSTED/CQC Inspection
4. New IT equipment provided for parent representatives in conjunction with a move to corporate email addresses

Income and Expenditure 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 – Regional Cluster

	2022 £	Note	2022 £	2021 £	2021 £
Receipts					
From Cluster Grant	3,800			5,500	
	<u>4,900</u>	1		<u>2,500</u>	
			8,700		8,000
Payments					
Meetings	0	2		0	
Administration Representative Engagement	(2,361)	3		(622)	1
Finance Services	0			(500)	
Audit	(400)			(400)	
Activities	(50)			(50)	
	<u>(4,062)</u>	4		<u>(3,000)</u>	
			<u>(6,903)</u>		<u>(4,572)</u>
Surplus receipts over payments			1,797		3,429
Reserves brought forward			12,031		8,602
Reserves carried forward			<u>13,827</u>		<u>12,031</u>

Notes

1. A grant was received from NHSE for the creation and distribution of an information film relating to avoiding hospital admissions for mental health reasons, although some expenditure was incurred in the preceding year
2. Due to COVID 19 lockdowns no physical meetings were held as all were held online instead.
3. An appointment was made for part of the year for an Administrator and limited cover was provided by other third parties
4. The Region finished work on a project with NHS England

Balance of Funds 31st March 2022

	2022	2021
		£
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	28,590	26,852
Net Assets	<u>28,590</u>	<u>26,852</u>
Current Liabilities		
Monies owed to the Cluster	13,827	12,031
Reserves		
General reserves	14,763	14,822
Net Liabilities	<u>26,852</u>	<u>26,852</u>

Balance of Funds (Regional) 31st March 2022

	2022	2021
	£	£
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	13,827	12,031
Net Assets	<u>13,827</u>	<u>12,031</u>
Reserves		
General reserves	13,827	12,031
Net Liabilities	<u>13,827</u>	<u>12,031</u>

Approved by the Trustees

14th October 2022

Andrew Howard
Secretary