



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 2019 to 31st March 2020

Julie COOPER
Kelli EVANS
Andrew HOWARD
Marylene ISIAIH
Margaret NYAMBIO
Penni THORNE
Tracie TWOHIGG

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 448 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)
Phil OGLEY
Ena SMALE (Admin and Membership Officer)
Penni THORNE (Treasurer)

The Steering Group meets monthly 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 2020, the Charity received grants from the Department of Education (through a scheme administered by Contact) and Buckinghamshire County Council. It 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 £23,050.

During the year the Charity expended £21,401.

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 surplus for the year was £1,649.

The Steering Group have resolved that a balance of £6,500 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 Charity ended the financial year upon which we are reporting in a significantly improved financial position as noted above. This was due to the fact that the lockdown restrictions imposed in late March in response to the COVID 19 pandemic required the Steering Group to take the decision to cancel the annual training event planned for the 20th March. As a result, funds set aside for the costs relating to venue hire; speakers costs; and refreshments were not used. The DfE who provide funding for all parent carer forums have informed us that we may hold these funds to expend in the 2020-21 financial year without impacting upon our grant for that year. It is the intent of the Steering Group to deliver the training event when Government guidelines permit it.

The year to mid-March 2020, operated along traditional lines although the quantity of meeting attended increased significantly. In the year, representatives attended 235 meetings with colleagues within the Local Area, which included work relating to key initiatives noted below as well as the continued cycle of governance and engagement meetings within SEND and related commissioned services. In addition, the Chair of FACT Bucks was invited to participate in the process for the appointment of the new Service Director for Education.

Last year's report noted the disappointment that the revision of arrangements for Home to School Transport for SEND CYP post 16 agreed by the Council were contradictory to those which had been finalised through co-production and we expressed our clear concern that they would create further distress and be difficult to implement. Unfortunately, our prediction proved correct and the consequences have been unnecessary stress for families and significantly increased staff resources to deliver it. With the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic the charges were stopped and have been suspended for the new academic year. FACT Bucks has again been asked to assist with a further review of the Home to School Transport statement for SEND CYP post 16 and we have agreed to do so, in the hope that the parent experience will enable a better long-term solution to be found.

During the year, we were asked to support the work of a consultancy firm, IMPOWER, who had been engaged by the Council to reflect on its performance in SEND matters. As always, we worked with IMPOWER to arrange for two engagement sessions – an open forum for any parent and a targeted group at a specific setting. We were promised access to the comments of parents made at these sessions to assist our ongoing work of giving voice to the concerns of SEND CYP parents and carers. Unfortunately, that promise was apparently made by the consultants without due consent and it was 6 months before the data was made public. In addition, we were saddened that the Council chose not to review the draft report with us instead handling it in isolation which, along with the arrival of COVID, meant that the final report was not seen by parents until after our year end. As a result, there was considerable unhappiness among those who had offered their time and thoughts to the process.

The Steering Group reviewed the report in detail and whilst we share the frustrations expressed by other parents, we have tried to offer reflections which seek to build better provision rather than simply criticise the process. As a result it has been agreed that finance data will be regularly reported to Integrated Services Board; the Outcomes Impact Group chaired by FACT Bucks will take responsibility for tracking outcomes and the learning from them as it influences the work of Improvement; the SEN Support Impact Group will lead on Early Identification & Support engaging Early Help and Commissioning; and the Coding/SEN classification process to involve parents in future will be dealt with in the Annual Review Working. The very significant issue of a Sufficiency Strategy remains delayed both by issues over the revised funding formula for Special Schools and by the impact of COVID 19 but FACT will continue to monitor its development and push for full parent involvement.

One of the challenges faced by Parent Carer forums is the annoyance expressed by some families that we keep talking and engaging with Council colleagues even when they do not act in good faith. There are times when, as parents, we would happily wish to shout and scream about the decisions being made as highlighted by both of the issues noted above. However, as the Parent Carer Forum for the Local Area, FACT Bucks is mandated by the Children and Families Act to give voice to the concerns of Parent Carers whilst working with professionals to coproduce effective solutions to meet the needs of SEND CYP. This is not an easy balance to achieve, especially in the context of wider funding constraints, but we believe it is important to be partners as well as critical friends in order that decisions that are made are taken with a clear understanding of the impact on the lives of SEND CYP and their families.

The Self Evaluation of SEND in the Bucks to which FACT have made a contribution, highlights the journey that remains if the aspirations of the Children and Families Act are to be a lived reality. Still too many SEND Children & Young People (CYP) are not at the centre of the process; there is insufficient collaboration between professionals and timescales are too long. We are active on the SEND Implementation Board which is tasked with delivering that change agenda and with it, improved outcomes for SEND CYP. Fortunately, there is a genuine collective recognition that there is a long way to travel and as a result, families continue to experience less than ideal processes and provisions. FACT Bucks continues to encourage all those involved to remember the impact on families and supports every effort being made to improve those lived experiences.

The year saw significant activity in terms of SEND Support (that which exists for CYP in need of additional support but for whom an EHCP is not seen to be necessary) with the launch and imbedding of the Ordinarily Available Provision document. This defines the specific responsibility of schools, colleges and settings for those with additional needs without an EHCP to be funded from within existing school budgets. In addition, a new tool was deployed for Reception and Years 1 & 2 students in relation to Speech and Language Therapy known as *Speechlink*. This online tool allows schools to assess how they can support students within school or if appropriate seek additional specialist support from the Therapy team. The initial feedback (the trial has been impacted by the COVID 19 lockdown) was very positive.

The County has also begun work to improve the provision for Preparing for Adulthood. The SEND reforms highlighted the need for Council's to have a robust and holistic approach to this key phase in development. The initial emphasis has been on addressing the effective transfer of SEND CYP from children to adult social care but FACT have argued strongly that the majority of SEND CYP are not impacted by this and instead there is a need for an overhaul of all elements of transition as well as more work based learning opportunities and housing options.

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 Charity has a small but very effective Steering Group; but 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, it is clear that 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. It remains a stated objective of the Steering Group to deliver more representative and to expand the Steering Group but we have already found that the Covid 19 pandemic has reduced rather than increased parental availability.

The year under review concluded with the introduction of the national lockdown and the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic were only beginning to emerge. The most immediate impact was the cancellation of our annual training and engagement event due on 21st March, which was to focus on Mental Capacity as well as the availability of sources of financial support. It is our intention to deliver that in 2020-21 but it is increasingly clear that it will have to be achieved in a virtual format.

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

28th September 2020

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 2019, 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 2019.

Jo-Ann Potts

28th September 2020

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Income and Expenditure 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 – General Fund

	2020 £	Note	2020 £	2019 £	2019 £
Receipts					
Grants – BCC	5,000			5,000	
Grants – DFE	17,650			18,995	
Regional Admin	400	1		300	
Donations					
			23,050		24,295
Payments					
Promotion Costs	(369)			(982)	
Special Events	0			0	
AGM/Training Event	0	2		(1,573)	
Attendance Fees	(5,143)			(4,509)	
Travel					
Costs	(2,338)			(2,164)	
Room Hire	(632)			(375)	
Refreshments	(788)			(874)	
Regional Participation	(1,536)	3		(802)	
Childcare	(85)			(344)	
General Admin	(7,880)			(7,650)	
Finance Admin	(1,370)			(1,370)	
Audit and Accountancy					
Fees	(100)			(100)	
Printing	0			(226)	
Postage and Carriage	(364)			(351)	
Telephone	0			0	
Stationery	(226)			(108)	
Website Costs	(330)			(3,576)	
IT Costs	(43)			(203)	
Training Costs	0			0	
Insurance	(146)			184	
Outcomes Project	0			0	
Miscellaneous	(52)			0	
		(21,401)			(25,021)
Surplus receipts over payments			1,649	2	(726)
Reserves brought forward			10,344		11,069
Reserves carried forward			<u>11,922</u>		<u>10,344</u>

Notes

1. Reflects the time required to complete the Regional finance function
2. Due to COVID 19 the event planned for late March was cancelled and the DfE have allowed the retention of funds to enable a similar event to be run in 2020-21
3. Attendance at the National Conference of PCFs

Income and Expenditure 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 – Regional Cluster

	2020 £	Note	2020 £	2019 £	2019 £
Receipts					
From Cluster	5,475			3,800	
Grant - DfE	<u>3,000</u>			<u>2,000</u>	
			8,475		5,800
Payments					
Meetings	(1,303)			(2,093)	
Administration Representative Engagement	(2,767)	1		(7,046)	1
Finance Services	(1,241)			(300)	
Audit	(400)			(50)	
Bad Debt Write Off	<u>(300)</u>	2		0	
			<u>(6,061)</u>		<u>(9,490)</u>
Surplus receipts over payments			2,414		(3,690)
Reserves brought forward			6,188		9,878
Reserves carried forward			<u><u>8,602</u></u>		<u><u>6,188</u></u>

Notes

1. A split has been made this year between the work of the administrator (vacant for 6 months) and the work of the regional representatives
2. A previously unpaid contribution from a Forum was written off

Balance of Funds 31st March 2020

	2020 £	2019 £
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	20,594	16,232
Net Assets	<u>20,594</u>	<u>16,232</u>
Current Liabilities		
Monies owed to the Cluster	8,602	5,888
Reserves		
General reserves	11,992	10,344
Net Liabilities	<u>20,594</u>	<u>16,232</u>

Balance of Funds (Regional) 31st March 2020

	2020 £	2019 £
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	8,602	5,888
Debtors	0	300
Net Assets	<u>8,602</u>	<u>6,188</u>
Reserves		
General reserves	8,602	6,188
Net Liabilities	<u>8,602</u>	<u>6,188</u>

Approved by the Trustees

28th September 2020

Andrew Howard
Secretary