



## **Kingston SEND Parent Carer Forum**

### **Constitution**

**January 2020**

This document details how the Kingston Parent Carer Forum [PCF] and the Kingston Parent Carer Forum Steering Committee [PCF-SC] will operate – the PCF Constitution.

#### **PCF Overview**

The Kingston SEND Parent Carer Forum is a team of volunteer parent\* carers that work together to be a vital connection between all parent carers and the local authority/local service providers based in Kingston. It is supported by the National Network of Parent Carer Forums [NNPCF].

Its purpose is to operate as a representative group of parent carers that work in partnership with local services, education, health, CCG [Clinical Commissioning Group] and other service providers to ensure the needs of children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities (defined in this document as children and young people with SEND) and the needs of their families are met.

The Kingston SEND PCF-SC manages and leads the work of the entire Kingston SEND PCF.

*\* the reference to 'parent' carer throughout this document refers to all people who have carer responsibilities, be it parent, grandparent, guardian, family member etc.*

#### **Kingston's PCF Vision**

***To advocate for all parent carers by working in partnership with the Local Authority and all service providers in order to ensure they meet the needs of children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities and the needs of their families.***

#### **The PCF Constitution**

The forum will be formally known as "Kingston SEND PCF".

Kingston SEND PCF and its funds will be administered and managed in accordance with the provisions detailed in this Constitution. Adoption of this Constitution is as of the date it is signed. This Constitution sets out the rules by which Kingston SEND PCF will be governed and these rules are legally binding by all its members.

The PCF-SC manages and leads the work of the PCF and listens to the views of all parent carers in the local area to ensure they know what is important to them and their families.

#### A. AIMS/OBJECTIVES:

- To be a consultative and advocating body representing all Kingston Borough based families that have child(ren) or young people with SEND, with a view to ensuring that all children and young people with SEND have access to reaching their potential and achieving the best possible outcomes
- To form a membership where parent carers and professionals work together sharing skills and experiences with the aim to help design/shape and improve services in the local area
- To challenge the local services when changes are needed to be made
- Provide a liaison point of contact in Kingston for Statutory and Voluntary Agencies
- Signpost members to services and agencies who may deal with more personal concerns they have *NOTE: the PCF does not advocate for individual families*

#### B. POWERS/AUTHORITY:

In furtherance of the aims and objectives the group may:

- Appoint an 'umbrella' organisation to oversee the administrative functions of the PCF AND PCFSC to ensure smooth running of the forum in line with its agreed objectives/aims.
- Employ and remunerate necessary staff, agreed and approved by the Chair, the Treasurer and a minimum of one other member of the PCFSC.
- Raise funds for the PCF by any lawful means, except for permanent trading.
- Accept donations/gifts for the PCF, declaring all gifts to the Chair & Treasurer and a minimum of one other member of the PCF-SC for approval where value is above £25. Gifts below the value of £25 needs only one other member of the PCF-SC to approve acceptance. This is to ensure the PCF is not brought into disrepute by accepting gifts that may possibly be seen as 'influencing' any PCF actions/decision making etc.
- Purchase equipment, where necessary, for the sole use of the PCF operations. All purchases will be recorded, a record of 'ownership' will be kept on where the equipment is stored, who has access to it, and how it is disposed of if no longer functional or required. All purchases must be approved by the Chair, the Treasurer and a minimum of one other member of the PCF-SC.
- Change its working practice to acknowledge/recognise any changes to PCF best practices and/or Government Policy. All amendments to be transparent and publicised to the wider PCF.
- Do anything else, within the law, which is necessary for the group to carry out their aims and objectives. Where funds are involved it must be approved by the Chair and a minimum of two other members of the PCF-SC.

#### C. CONDUCT:

- All members will uphold the integrity of the Kingston SEND PCF, ensuring its aims and values are maintained, as noted above.
- Grievances between members should not be aired in public and should be addressed to the PCF-SC in the first instance to avoid bringing the reputation of the PCF into question

- To show mutual respect, trust and understanding to all members in the PCF, respecting any confidential matters discussed *NOTE: Confidentiality is important except where there is a safeguarding concern around a child or vulnerable young person, wherein the PCF must formally report any concerns identified during discussions/meetings*
- Celebrate equality and diversity and be accessible to all parent carers in the community, being inclusive to any challenges they may have in being able to participate in the forum

#### D. USE OF FUNDS/INCOME:

- The Kingston SEND PCF grant and any gained funds shall be applied solely towards the promotion and running costs of the PCFs aims and objectives, as listed above.
- Members incurring expenses that are directly related to Kingston SEND PCF business i.e. travel, child care costs etc., can claim those expenses with the Treasurer. Receipts/invoices must always be submitted alongside the expenses claim. Where receipts are lost/unavailable the decision for remuneration will be taken by the Chair, the Treasurer and at least one of member of the PCFSC.
- Member's expenses that could potentially exceed £50, including travel for meetings, must be approved in advance by the Treasurer and at least one of member of the PCF-SC.
- If attending a meeting on behalf of the PCF, fuel expenses can be claimed for a journey of up to 100 miles round trip without prior approval needed. Where a journey is greater than 100 miles then alternative travel i.e. train, should be considered.
- Approval of expenses can be done over email to avoid delays in payments being made.
- A 'Petty Cash' box of £500 will be kept by the Treasurer, all other funds will be held with the appointed 'umbrella organisation' that the PCF-SC will contract out most of its administrative functions to. All petty cash transactions must be recorded in a petty cash log.
- If the PCF is dissolved and there are any remaining funds, all outstanding debts must be paid first and the law states that any remaining assets should be passed to another charitable body. The members that are in post at the time of the PCF dissolving will vote for the relevant charity. That charity must have beneficiaries who are either children with additional needs/disabilities or families who have children with additional needs/disabilities.

### **PCF Membership**

Membership to Kingston SEND PCF is open to all family members and carers of any child or young person, under the age of 25, who have SEND, and live in or receive local services from Kingston Borough.

There is also an associate membership for practitioners, both within the Voluntary and Statutory sectors, for parent carers whose child reaches the age of 26 and for bereaved parent carers. This membership will have no voting rights, but will be kept up to date with newsletters and other general information published by the PCF. They will be able to attend open meetings and events. Professionals and service providers may be invited to attend/participate in meetings as appropriate.

Membership is not transferrable to other forums/groups.

The PCF-SC will maintain a register of members and will ensure the forum is compliant with General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR].

Each member is entitled to one vote only, where voting is required.

Any member may request to be removed from the register at any time. They must submit the request to the PCF-SC who will endeavour to have the contact removed within 2 weeks of the request being submitted. Once removed from the register the member will no longer receive any communications from the PCF.

If the PCF-SC considers that any member's conduct is in any way harmful to, or impeding, the aims and objectives of the PCF then they will request an audience with the said member to understand the situation. If grievances/concerns cannot be resolved the PCF-SC will reserve the right to terminate the individual's membership. Their right to appeal will be through a mutually accepted independent mediator.

### **PCF Steering Committee Membership**

The Kingston SEND PCF-SC is a team made up of no more than 12 and no less than 8 PCF members at any one time. The inaugural members are self-elected during the initial set up phase, based on a desire to improve services in the area for children and young people with SEND.

The Steering Committee members are made up of the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee Officers, where those particular members are nominated/appointed by other committee members at an initial Steering Committee meeting. Steering Committee Officers make up the rest of the Steering Committee membership, ensuring no less than 5 and no more than 9 Officers are appointed at any one time.

All members, regardless of role, will stand for election every 2 years.

Where voting is required, each PCF-SC member is entitled to one vote only.

The role of a PCF-SC member is to participate in all meetings/discussions to the best of their ability, to facilitate parent carers/families voices being heard and to represent the whole PCF in a positive and constructive manner.

Each PCF-SC member will be responsible for representing the views of the wider group of parent carers. Thus each member should have a system of networking and disseminating information to other parent carers.

Parent carers wishing to fill a vacant PCF-SC member role will be required to produce a personal statement, in no more than 200 words, detailing how they would be representative of other parent carers in the community. The PCF-SC (with a quorum of 5) will then discuss and vote if the nominee is a suitable fit for the PCF-SC. Where there is more than one nominee for a vacant role the PCF-SC may decide to appoint multiple nominees as long as the appointments would not breach the maximum of 12 members within the PCF-SC.

PCF-SC members must declare and sign a 'Declaration of Interest' form to declare all conflicts of interest on election i.e. they or a close family works for one of the local services/local authority.

Should a conflict of interest circumstance change throughout their term in office the member must declare that to the Chair and Secretary in a timely manner.

The PCF committee cannot directly organise a campaign as a group but individual PCF members can join campaigns, where they can impart their knowledge and experiences etc, as long as the campaign does not represent a conflict of interest to the aims of the PCF, and no PCF resources are utilised.

A member can resign from the PCF-SC at any time, with written notice to be given to the Chair and Secretary.

A PCF-SC member can be removed from office if they hold a criminal record, take part in criminal activities or display any conduct that is unbecoming to the role of a committee member

The PCF-SC aims to be as representative of its community as much as possible.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are:

***Chair:***

The overall official spokesperson of the PCF. They will chair all meetings or delegate the task (with sufficient notice). They are responsible for official addresses to the public/organisations/local authority/local services etc.

The will ensure the aims and objectives of the PCF are met.

***Secretary:***

The PCF-SC will contract out most of its administrative functions to an umbrella organisation. The role of the Secretary will be to primarily ensure the umbrella organisation is meeting its obligations of the administration functions such as taking minutes, logging actions, updating website will relevant content etc.

The Secretary will also act as a contact to ensure effective communication and be responsible for circulating minutes, agendas and general information to all members.

Agendas need to be circulated no later than 1 week prior to meetings. Action points to be circulated shortly after a meeting in order for all members to be aware of actions on them and any agreed dates for the completion of the action.

They also follow the general role of the Officer.

***Treasurer:***

The umbrella organisation will oversee the majority of the committee's finances. However the committee will hold a Petty Cash sum of £500 [maximum] along with a log book auditing the moving

of any monies in/out of this cashbox. Where funds reach below £50 the Treasurer can request a topup [to an overall maximum £500] from the umbrella organisation.

The issuing of funds from this Petty Cash must adhere to all 'rules' within sections B and C under the 'PCF Constitution' above.

They also follow the general role of the Officer.

***Officer:***

Responsible to attend all meetings, assist in the overall objective of the PCF, ensure the views of the wider group of parent carers are heard/understood. Officers can be part of a PCF sub-committee or choose to lead/own a specific line of enquiry and attend any local services meetings around that topic. They should have a system of networking and disseminating information to other parent carers on any specific topics they wish to lead with.

***Member:***

Will constructively participate in termly meetings sharing experience, knowledge, ideas, concerns of provisions etc. They may form part of a sub-committee if one is set up. They are allowed one vote each when voting is required.

***Associate member:***

Same as 'Member' but they do not have voting rights.

**Communications**

Whilst confidentiality is paramount (except where there is a safeguarding concern), constructive criticism should be encouraged. Steering Committee members, as well as all other members should feel able to openly share their views, ideas, concerns etc. at all times, within forum meetings.

Information and communications will be provided in a range of ways/formats to support the engagement of a wide number of parent carers. Words and terminology used in documents that are circulated at meetings, presentations and discussions will be free of jargon and abbreviations (or detail added to appendix if needed) so that no one is excluded from participating.

The PCF-SC will meet regularly - at least 8 meetings a year; and hold a minimum of 2 full PCF meetings every year, one of which will be an AGM [Annual General Meeting]. Members will be advised no later than 8 weeks in advance of the scheduled date. Any Kingston based parent carer can put topics on the meeting agendas by contacting the Steering Committee<sup>+</sup>. There should be a quorum of no less than 5 members present for a decision to be made.

PCF-SC meetings can be called by at least 5 members of the Steering Group when some special or urgent business has to be considered. Such meetings require 3 weeks' notice to members.

Venues & meeting times for full PCFs will be arranged with the convenience of parent carers in mind.

Service providers may be invited to attend PCF meetings where appropriate<sup>^</sup>.

Members may be nominated/self-elected to sit on working groups set up by service providers or may themselves set up a sub-committee to work on a specific 'lines of enquiry'. Members sitting on such working groups/committees will be responsible to feed information back to the PCF-SC. All

members taking on a 'representative' role will sign a Parental Representation Agreement Form that the PCF-SC will provide.

The PCF-SC will provide feedback to its membership through regular newsletters. This will include outcomes from consultations and participation work undertaken, and in particular the effect/impact on future service provision.

Information, including agendas, to be presented at meetings will be circulated no later than one week before the meeting in order for members to have timely access to it.

It is understood that there will be differences of opinion and priorities between members and decisions will be made by consensus where possible, or where not possible, by majority.

PCF-SC members will be entitled to claim reasonable expenses for travel and child care incurred to attend particular meetings – see 'use of funds' section above.

Representative Parents [RP] names and details of the areas of need/working groups they represent will be publicised by the PCF-SC in order for parent carers to know who is representing them

*\* topics for discussion should be received no later than 2 weeks prior to the meeting to ensure Steering Committee members can prepare agendas in an appropriate timeframe.*

*^ if parent carers are wanting specific service providers to attend then they must contact the PCF-SC at least 6 weeks in advance of the scheduled meeting. NOTE: there is no guarantee the service provider will be available but all endeavours would be done to ensure they attend.*

### **Amendments to the Constitution**

This document may only be amended by consensus passed at a PCF-SC meeting.

Any amendments made to the Constitution will be circulated to the full membership for consultation before it is fully ratified.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print: \_\_\_\_\_

