

Constitution for Sutton Parents Forum

Aim

The aim of the forum shall be:

- To give a voice to parents and carers of disabled children and young people (0-25) in Sutton and, as appropriate, the surrounding areas
- To work together in partnership to influence and contribute to the development of services
- To use the grant from Department for Education and LA effectively to grow and strengthen participation in Sutton
- To be the contact point for Local Authority requests for consultation, parental involvement or participation in any work streams
- To consider new opportunities, to support families and develop service provision, as they arise
- To hold regular events and coffee mornings where parent/carers will have an opportunity to share views and gain information, advice and support

Membership

- Full membership of the forum shall be open to any individual parent or carer without regard to disability, political or religious affiliation, race, culture, socio-economic status, sex or sexual orientation
- The Forum shall be managed by a Steering Group of no fewer than 6 and no more than 8 members with advice/input from trusted strategic partners
- The officers of the Steering Group shall consist of a chair, secretary and treasurer; there is no fixed term of position
- The Steering Group may co-opt onto the committee individuals in an advisory and non-voting capacity who it feels will help to fulfil the aims of the Forum
- The Steering Group shall meet half termly but more frequently as and when required, with weekly working parties during term time
- At least 4 Steering Group members including the chair and treasurer must be present for a Steering Group meeting to be quorate
- Voting at meetings will normally be by show of hands but other alternatives can take place by agreement and the majority vote rules
- Meetings are to be held during the school day but with plenty of notice to allow parents who work or attend college to make necessary arrangements
- Should any conflict arise between the Steering Group, an independent arbitrator can be invited in possibly with the Local Authority and other agencies and strategic partners
- Members need to give notice in writing

Duties of the Officers

Chair:

- Chair all the Steering Group meetings
- Ensure that minutes are taken and distributed prior to meetings
- Ensure that decisions taken are with the majority agreement
- To act as the key link from the forum with the Local Authority unless otherwise agreed by Steering Group
- To represent the forum views
- To distribute minutes to Steering Group Members
- To arrange meetings and all necessary papers prior to the meeting
- To send out information to forum members as agreed by the steering group
- To ensure dates for meetings are set well in advance at end of meeting
- Apply for DfE grant via Contact a Family
- Consider and plan development of the forum and apply for additional funding streams where appropriate

Duties of Committee Members:

- Attend meetings and cafés
- Carry out work as directed
- Consider and plan development of the forum and apply for additional funding streams where appropriate

Co-Secretaries or Secretary:

- To take minutes at each meeting, ways of sharing to be determined by secretaries

Finance Officers:

- Apply for DfE grant via Contact a Family
- To keep accurate account of expenditure
- Produce financial statements to share with the steering group about expenditure
- Consider and plan development of the forum and apply for additional funding streams
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Annual General Meeting

- The forum shall hold an Annual General Meeting every 3 years
- All forum members shall be given at least 14 days' notice of the AGM and shall be entitled to attend and vote
- At least 10 members of the wider forum must be present for AGM to take place

The business of the AGM shall include:

- Receiving a report about the Forum and Steering Group activities over the year from the chair and treasurer
- Receiving a report on the finances of the forum from the treasurer
- Considering any other matter as may be decided

Code of Conduct for Steering Group Members at meetings:

- To remember that members are representing the forum for all parent-carers of disabled children 0-25 years
- Steering Group members should not refer to or seek to promote their own child or young people, personal aims, or own organisation when representing the forum
- Listen, respect others opinions and ensure a shared decision
- Give everyone a chance to speak to ensure quiet members are not ignored but encouraged to participate
- Use opinion sheets to give everyone a chance to write it down if necessary or preferred
- Respect members' cultures
- Okay to bring children if necessary – get a crèche if necessary
- Be punctual. The meeting will start on time. Apologies for not attending steering group need to be given
- Apologies need to be given as soon as possible if not attending other meetings so an alternative representative can be found
- Have designated group members to support individual parents who may need it rather than individual problems dominate the meeting
- Find what works for all of the group re-dates and times of meeting
- Develop a culture of Democracy within the group
- Ensure fairness and equity of representation to ensure forum is represented in the best way by the most appropriate forum member. Develop a criteria to determine the best representative
- Communication from the forum to the Local Authority will come via the chair following agreement from the steering group
- Minutes from the steering group will go to all the steering group members
- Members representing the forum at any external meeting are to be respectful and professional at all times even if disagreeing with information at the meetings
- Two parents should attend meetings to support each other and ensure that all information is understood
- Information from any meeting is to be reported back to the steering group in written format
- When making any challenges to the LA or any other organisation, members are to be clear they have all the necessary information and evidence necessary prior to any challenge

- Steering Group members should adhere to Chatham House Rules – keep information that is deemed confidential within the group and agree what is shared by a wider audience
- Any conflict between individual steering group members should be addressed initially via the chair
- Any group members not adhering to the code of conduct can be asked to leave the steering group by a majority vote

Criteria for Representing the Forum

- Willing and confident to represent
- Commitment to attend Steering Group and cafés regularly
- Has knowledge and understanding of the agenda
- Willing to gather information about topic from others
- Able to feed back to the group
- Honest and shares own experiences where appropriate
- Shadows another SG member for first 3 Boards

To be revised March 2017