



Code of Conduct Policy

Introduction

We, the Parent Carers Together (PCT) Steering Group, are responsible for all actions carried out by PCT steering group members, volunteers and staff when acting on behalf of PCT. We have drawn up this Code of Conduct in order that members, partners, and funders have confidence in our work.

We ensure that our actions and behaviours are transparent and professional, without any suggestion of improper influence. We uphold the spirit as well as the wording of this Code of Conduct. We use the *Nolan Committee Principles of Public Life* and strive to go beyond these (see Appendix 1).

The term “we” and “us” have been used throughout to show that the Code of Conduct applies to Steering Group Members, staff, and parent carers equally.

Communication

We understand that how we communicate with each other, with the Forum membership and with all our strategic partners, is the key to our successful leadership. We:

- use **assertive communication skills**: we ensure that what we say to each other and to our members is clear, accurate, appropriate, and always in the interests of the safe, smooth running of the Forum
- use **ground rules** for our meetings: we expect everyone present to agree and abide by these ground rules
- are **reliable and dependable**: we provide clear information to the membership, and explain when this has not been possible
- respect **confidentiality**: we do not share any confidential information outside of the Steering Group in line with the **PCT Confidentiality Policy**, unless we believe that a child or vulnerable adult is being harmed or is at risk of harm in which case, we follow the **PCT Safeguarding Policies and Procedures**
- are **honest** with each other when our private lives may affect our ability to carry out our responsibilities appropriately
- **acknowledge** our professional and personal boundaries so that we can be useful to the membership
- **share** leadership tasks so that no individual at any time feels over-burdened by their role or responsibility and allocate roles and tasks amongst ourselves to utilise individuals' **skills** and **strengths**

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Bournemouth Christchurch Poole

the voice of parent carers of young people with special educational needs and disabilities

- we take up **learning** and development opportunities & actively seek **support**
- when we face challenging situations
- adhere to the **PCT Social Media Policy** to ensure **appropriate** communication

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- PCT is committed to respecting and representing our members fairly and we aim to represent all parent carers in Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole equally. We respect those with cultures and values different from our own. Whilst personal experience may inform this, we do not rely entirely on our own experiences, views, and judgements. We represent our members by listening to a diverse range of opinions and experiences. This reflects **PCT's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy**.

Political Activities

- PCT's work may take it into the political arena, and we ensure that we demonstrate our non-political nature, and are impartial about **party politics**. When making any representation, the Steering Group is clearly seen to present a balanced case in support of PCT's purpose and aims. Steering Group members are allowed to engage in political activities, including standing for election to public office, if it is legal for them to do so. However, participation is entirely personal, and their political opinions do not represent PCT's position.

Campaigning

- We recognise that Parent Carers Together and campaign groups may be trying to influence the same changes, it may therefore be mutually beneficial to find ways of working together to improve services for the families we all represent.
- However, we acknowledge that campaigning is inconsistent with the ethos of Parent Carers Together and parent carer forums in general.
- Parent Carers Together has a seat at the decision-making table. We have an equal relationship with our local partners where we can use our knowledge as users of SEND services to work with all service providers to find ways to improve these services with available resources.
- Having a seat at the table does not stop us from supporting campaign activity where it aligns with our objectives, it simply prevents us (as a forum) from actively campaigning ourselves.

Parent Carers Together will not initiate, incite, or run campaigns.

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- Membership of a campaign group, or other organisation is an entirely personal matter if it is understood that this does not represent Parent Carers Together's position and the member discloses the information in the Declaration of Interests.

Conflicts of Interest

The Steering Group discusses potential conflicts of interest issues e.g., when a PCT member is considering standing for election as an officer or a local representative role, including grant panels and/or tenders. Where The Steering Group agrees there is a conflict of interest, they recommend action, and this decision is final in accordance with *PCT Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure*.

Disclosure of Interest

Any member (or their close relative) receiving a personal or business benefit (other than Honorarium/Salary and expenses) as a consequence of PCT activity discloses this conflict. Where our personal conduct may be viewed as conflicting with the work of PCT, we disclose details to the Chair and record this in the minutes of meetings.

There are two main examples where a benefit could occur:

- A Duality of Interest. Where the circumstances could potentially bring about some personal or business gain;
- A Conflict of Interest. Where a PCT interest and a personal/business/other Voluntary Sector interest occurs over the same matter.

Both types of interest must be disclosed. The forum Steering group are responsible to ensure that annually members complete a declaration form. These forms will be held in a register that is open to public scrutiny upon request.

Aims and Values

Our work and reputation rely on us upholding and promoting PCT's aims and values.

We should all work to the same aims and uphold the same values. We are required to incorporate these in our conduct in relation to PCT and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums.

Hospitality

We may not solicit hospitality. Occasional modest hospitality is allowed. If in doubt, speak to the Chair.



Personal Conduct

As a representative of Parent Carers Together, the representative role has clear responsibilities and requirements in relation to personal conduct and expects any member who represents the forum to strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of our wider membership, and partners whom we work with.

You must not bring PCT into disrepute while acting in your representative capacity. As representative, your actions and behaviour may be subject to additional scrutiny.

Those who represent PCT must ensure that in their conduct and activity they:

- Conduct ourselves appropriately for the duty or function that we are carrying out or attending, which includes treating all of those we come into contact with courteously and with dignity and respect.
- Respect diversity and different cultures and values.
- Are honest and trustworthy;
- Communicate in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way;
- Respect confidential information and do not share any information that is confidential outside of the Steering Group
- Are reliable and dependable or provide clear information to the Steering groups if they are experiencing challenges that may prevent them from being so.
- Honour work commitments, agreements and arrangements and, when it is not possible to do so, inform the Steering group members as appropriate
- Ensure that the views of parent carers are fully and accurately represented. Whilst personal experience may inform this, we must not rely entirely on own experiences, views and judgements, but be fully representative of the wider membership.

Representatives must declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and making sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice.

Representatives must not behave in a way, which would call into question your suitability to be a representative of other parent carers.

Representatives must inform the chair about any personal difficulties that might affect their ability to exercise their responsibilities appropriately. As a representative of PCT you are expected to work in partnership at the highest level with various Local Authority and Health Services Officers, any personal circumstance which may pose a conflict for individuals, and therefore for the organisation must be declared to the chair immediately.



The following are examples of types of circumstances:

- Any allegation that an individual may have committed, or is being investigated in relation to having committed a crime
- Any child protection or safeguarding concern relating to children and / or vulnerable adults.
- Any significant challenge between individuals and Government agencies (e.g., where individuals may end up in a litigious relationship with a central or local Government Department)
- Other similar circumstances

In these situations, it will be standard practice to ask the representative member to temporarily stand down until the issues are resolved. This is a neutral and non-judgemental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the individual involved is able to focus all of their attention on the issue at hand. It is felt necessary however to insist on this protocol to safeguard both PCT and the individual involved.

Consideration will be given as to how the roles and responsibilities of that individual will be covered in their absence, and whether a temporary replacement should be sought.

Failure to Follow Code of Conduct

We recognise that failure to follow this Code of Conduct may damage PCT and will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

In the event of an alleged breach of this Code of Conduct, any investigation or action will be undertaken in accordance with *PCT's Complaints Policy and Procedure*. Based on the outcome of the investigation, a range of actions may be taken from seeking appropriate training and support for the individual member, to asking them to permanently step down, depending on the severity and impact of any alleged breach.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Steering Group and updated as necessary in response to changes in legislation, contractual arrangements, guidance and good practice or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.