

Working with your parent carer forum


This one-pager explains what a parent carer forum is, the importance of parent carer voice, and how we can all work together. It is written for anyone working in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision and support.

Parent carer forums (PCFs) provide a collective voice for local SEND families

PCFs were first established via a government-funded initiative in 2008, with more being created after the Children & Families Act 2014.

Local services are strongly encouraged to work together with their local PCF - see the SEND Code of Practice. This is to ensure that the voices of SEND families are not only heard but are an integral part of shaping all stages of SEND service provision.

 [More about parent carer forums](#)

 [SEND code of Practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

East Sussex Parent Carer Forum (ESPCF) represents over 1,000 parent carers in East Sussex

Parent carers tell us about what life is like for their child or young person with SEND in East Sussex: what is going well, what isn't working, what should change - and how.

We present this feedback in our day-to-day work with services, usually by a parent carer representative being part of the relevant project group or board.

Parent carer reps bring vital expertise via their lived experiences, providing valuable insight, knowledge, and skills.

How we gather feedback

School visits Feedback forms
Focus groups Social media
Polls & surveys Information sessions
Coffee mornings Community events

We aim to work in co-production with services to achieve the best outcomes for families

Co-production means an equal and reciprocal relationship between those who use services and those who plan and run them. This is different to consultation, participation, or engagement - although there is a place for all of these too.

Put simply, co-production in practice is:

Listen



Discuss



Do together

Co-production is not always easy; there may be challenges and disagreements. But this is a natural part of the process and can be worked through together.

 [Curious about co-production video](#)

 [East Sussex co-production handbook](#)

How to get started

Get in touch with us for a chat. It doesn't matter what stage you are at with a project or idea, although the earlier the better is a good rule.

Think about who needs to be around the table. Who will be affected by this work? Are there any deadlines or time pressure?

Have a look at our website - read previous reports, newsletters, and articles to get an idea of what we do.

And then simply send us a quick email or give us a call.

Positive change together!