**Background**

**Southampton Parent Carer Forum exists as a force for positive change.** At its core, our purpose is to make life better for parents of children and young people with additional needs in Southampton by creating a loving and supportive community in which we all belong, where our challenges are truly acknowledged, our voices are heard and together, we can shape the services that our children deserve.

We are an independent constituted group made up of parent carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND 0-25). We work with organisations that provide services for our families. We are completely independent of the local council and health services which lets us share the experiences and ideas of parent carers, giving them a voice and effect positive change.

**Our vision**

**Our Vision is for an accepting and empathetic wider community where the daily challenges faced by Parent Carers are recognised and understood, and there is a shared commitment to overcome them.** It’s a world where children with additional needs are valued, understood, and can reach their full potential; where Parent Carers are recognised as people (not just parents) and the provisions required to enable them to live safe, full and happy lives are within reach and readily available without having to go into battle.

**Our Values**

Making life better for people and speaking up to fix a broken system isn’t always straightforward or easy so we lean on each other and all of our amazing employees, volunteers, stakeholders, partner organisations and family members to keep us going.

All those who represent or work with our organisation have lived experience of caring for children with additional needs and share our organisational values, these values and the way we behave to demonstrate them are what makes us so special; they are:

**Everyone belongs** - our families are the beating heart of our pan-disability-friendly organisation. Inclusivity, respect and acceptance are central to everything we say and do. Everyone, regardless of their background or the circumstances they find themselves in, will be welcomed warmly, helped to navigate the tough times and thrive in a place free from stigma.

**People, as well as parents** - We know, without a doubt, our parent carers do a phenomenal job as parents, but we want to get to know the person behind the parent too. Being with us should leave every person feeling seen, heard and validated for who they are.

**Happy parents, happy child, happy house** - When parents come to us, they might be experiencing fear, exhaustion, sadness, loneliness and a host of other feelings. We create a safe and caring environment where parents can feel at ease and their children can simply be who they are leaving parents feeling recharged and hopeful.

**Lived experience can make all the difference** - Each of our families have something of value to contribute based on how they experience the world around them. Sharing isn’t something we expect from our families but if you do want to tell us what life is like for you, we are here to listen, learn and be open to different perspectives and ideas. We gather our learnings and form a strong, collective voice to hold public bodies to account for shaping better services for us all.

**Together we’re stronger** - At times we need to lean on each other so we can keep breaking barriers to get what our families need. We know that Parent carers are stronger than they think, but we don’t always feel strong and that’s ok too. We stick together because united, we can be there for one another and create an unstoppable force for change!

**Steering Group**

**Role of the steering group**: The business of the Southampton Parent Carer Forum will be managed by the steering group, including a chair, finance officer and secretary. The steering group will provide guidance to the forum on aims and priorities.

**Steering group structure:** The Steering Group Committee comprises no more than 12 people in total and no less than 3, with no less than 80% being parent carers.

There should be a place on the parent forum steering committee for specialist workers representing small community groups e.g., Travellers, Elective Home Education Community. This specialist worker/s will have been nominated by each particular group of parents.

The term of steering group members is one year but all members may reapply to be on the Southampton Parent Carer Forum steering group.

Steering group decision making powers: Each member of the steering group will have one vote each. The steering committee recognises that there will be differences of opinion and priority between members. Decisions will be made by consensus where possible, or where not possible, by majority. The Chair has the casting vote if a majority is not reached. There should be a quorum of no less than 1/3 of Steering Group members present for a decision to be made.

In the event of any disagreement which cannot be reconciled or in the event of any concerns about the behaviour of a steering group member the Code of Conduct will be followed. If disagreements still cannot be resolved the Steering Group will seek outside impartial support. Where there is an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, the complaints procedure may be followed.

**Frequency of meetings:** Southampton Parent Carer Forum steering group meetings will be held at least every term. Notification of meetings will be at least 2 weeks in advance and every effort will be made to arrange a time which is convenient to the majority of the steering group.

**Agenda items:** Any Parent Carer of a child or young person with special educational needs and disabilities living in the Southampton area can put an item on the agenda by contacting the steering committee at chair@sotonpcf.org.uk

Information to be presented at the meeting must be circulated in good time prior to the meeting in order that members have timely access to information.

**Steering group membership requirements:** All members of the steering group must be a member of the Southampton SEND community as described above. Each member will be responsible for representing the views of a wider group of parents. Therefore, each member should have a system of networking and disseminating information to other parents.

All members of the steering group may be required to obtain a DBS check due to having oversight on how Southampton Parent Carer Forum uses public money and having oversight of the data collection of member details.

All steering group members will be required to sign the code of conduct for Southampton Parent Carer Forum and adhere to the organisations policies.

To ensure the coherent running of Southampton Parent Carer Forum members need to attend meetings consistently where possible. If a member has not attended three meetings consecutively without giving apologies, they will be asked to stand down.

Members will be entitled to claim reasonable expenses for travel and childcare incurred to attend the steering group meetings, though an attendance fee is not paid.

How to apply: An application to join the steering must be sent to the chair via email at insert email or by post inset postal address. Steering group members will be elected via a unanimous vote at a steering group meeting. All applications will be managed under Southampton Parent Carer Forum data protection policy which can be found on our website.

How to resign: A member can resign from the Southampton Parent Carer Forum Steering Group Committee at any time, by putting this in writing to the Chair.

**First version approved**: Insert Date

**Date of next revision:** Insert Date

**Responsibility of:** The Steering Group