



National Network of Parent Carer Forums

'Our Strength Is Our Shared Experience'

Coproduction, campaigning and the independence of Parent Carer Forums

Mrunal Sisodia and Gail Walshe

Definitions

Charity commission definition of campaigning

“The commission uses this word to refer to awareness-raising and to educate or involve the public by mobilising their support on a particular issue, or to influence or change public attitudes. It also uses it to refer to campaigning activity which aims to ensure that existing laws are observed.”

NNPCF definition of coproduction:

“An equal and reciprocal partnership where everyone’s experience, knowledge and skills are used to create better outcomes”

Overview

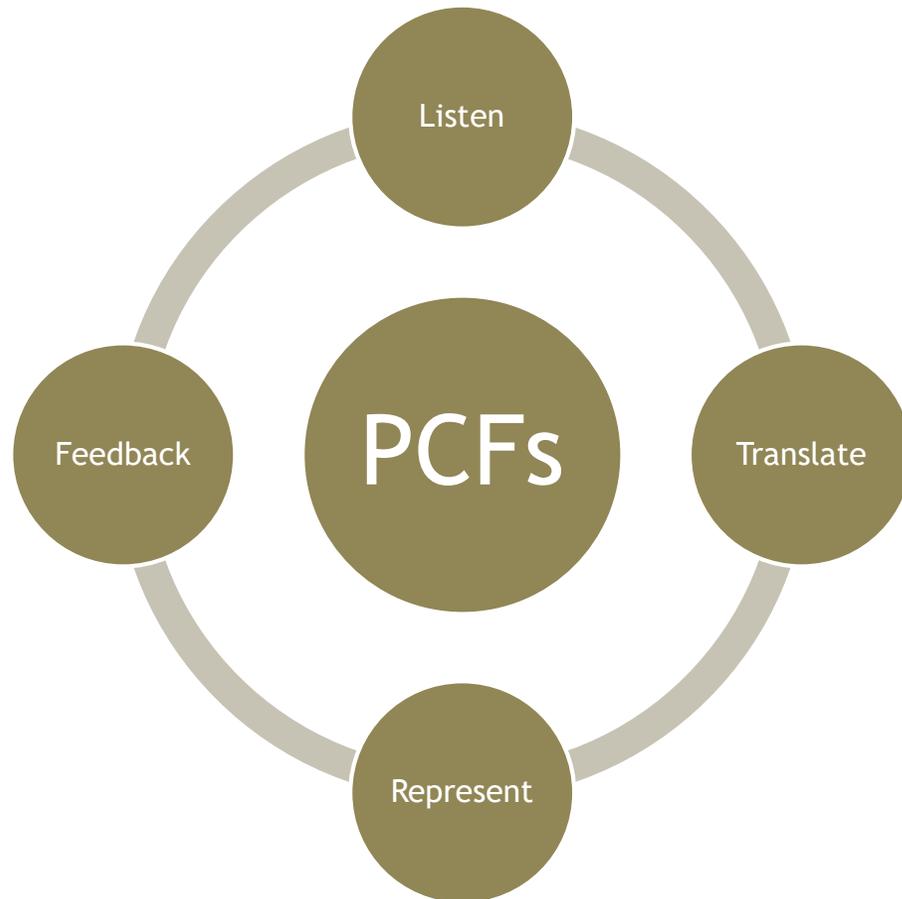


Total honesty

- ▶ Parent carer forums are there to represent their communities
- ▶ This means we have an obligation to “tell truth to power”. This includes:
 - ▶ Challenging
 - ▶ Criticising
 - ▶ Holding to account
- ▶ *“Change only happens if you are brutally honest about where you are and relentlessly optimistic about where you want to get to.”*



What is the role of parent carer forums?



- ▶ Be clear about how you draw the line between the lived experience of families and what you tell decision makers.
- ▶ At the NNPCF we talk about our role as being 4 simple things:
 1. Listen
 2. Translate
 3. Represent
 4. Feedback

Be clear about how you listen

- Meetings and events
- Member surveys
- Consultations and calls for evidence
- Social media
- One to one conversations
- Your conference
- Your own lives



Feedback



Too often, forums are terrible at feeding back to our members

- ▶ “We are too busy doing the work”
- ▶ “We don’t like to blow our own trumpet”
- ▶ Forums only communicate when something is finished
- ▶ Forums communicate process (we attended xx meetings last month)

Any communication is good but

- ▶ what forums really need to communicate is *what* they are saying on behalf of their members.
- ▶ Tell people that you have understood and shared their issues
- ▶ Tell people how you have worked to address those concerns

Forum MOU

- ▶ The new MOU between the forum and the local authority includes some key points
- ▶ Coproduction
- ▶ Independence
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Honesty



Forum MOU

New as a part of the DfE grant process for 2019-20:

- ▶ We commit to co-produce with the local parent carer forum as described in the SEND Code of Practice
- ▶ We recognise the independence of the parent carer forum
- ▶ We value the role of the parent carer forum in representing the needs, experiences and views of parent carers of children and young people with SEND including their role in raising issues, providing constructive criticism and holding partners to account.
- ▶ All parties agree to work together with respect and as equal partners

The unique role of PCFs



Parent carer forums are embedded in the code of practice



PCFs do the *real* work that makes the system better (e.g. writing policies, reviewing EHCPS, sitting on panels, attending decision making board)



Other recent guidance has also explicitly required Local Authorities to work with PCFs

Additional schools capital funding decisions

Local area inspections guidance (esp. revisit guidance)

Transport consultations



There are additional opportunities to embed PCFs in the system coming up:

Revision of the code of practice 2020

New Local Area inspections guidance post 2021



However, more needs to be done to enforce these requirements

The unique role of PCFs

We are the only parent-carer group that is mandated to be truly representative (many others are condition specific and other rely too heavily on social media)

We are the only group that regards telling people what the issues are as the *start* of the conversation - we carry on and work with stakeholders to make things better.

Relationships

- ▶ It takes years to build a relationship, moments to break one.
- ▶ Some guidance
 - ▶ Don't say anything in public that you haven't already said privately
 - ▶ Be respectful
 - ▶ Be factual
 - ▶ Use anecdotes to illustrate points
 - ▶ No surprises

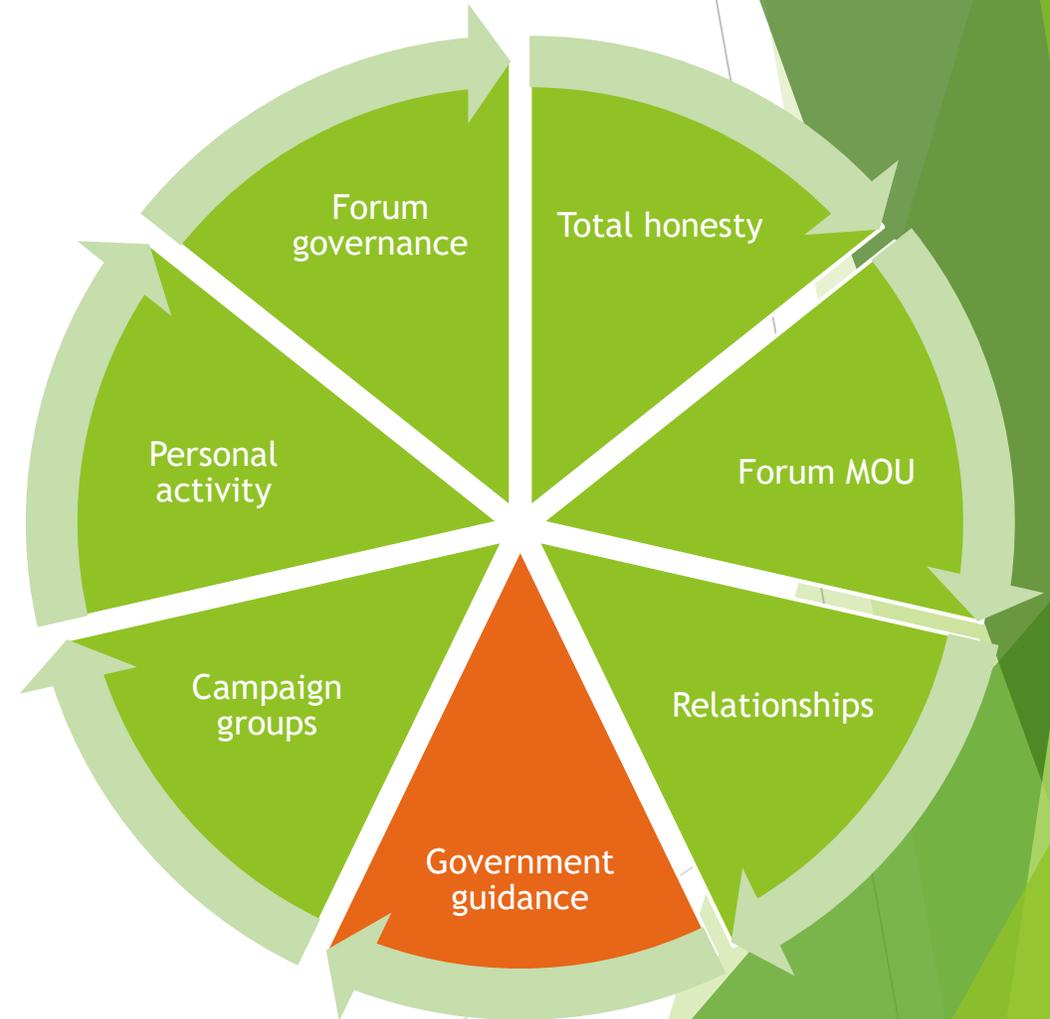
The golden rule

“Treat others as you would like them to treat you.”



Government guidance

- ▶ Since February 2016, there have been limitations on use of government funds for campaign activity. This is written into government contracts
- ▶ Funds from non governmental contracts are not subject to the same restrictions
- ▶ But, you need to decide whether a particular campaign activity is compatible with your ethos of coproduction



Government guidance



https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/about_us/media-centre/SIR_STUART_ETHERINGTON_001.pdf

Letter from the Prime Minister to NCVO December 2018

- ▶ “the Government recognises the importance of the voice of charities and social enterprises in speaking out...contributing their valuable insights and expertise to the development of government policy.”
- ▶ “...it is vital that the sector’s independence and freedom of speech are protected...”
- ▶ “...Government contracts do include provisions to ensure that providers adhere to the high standards we expect...”
- ▶ “...these clauses are in no way ‘gagging clauses’”
- ▶ “They do not stop providers...fairly criticising...”
- ▶ “...they do not charities from campaigning for a particular cause and would never be used as a means of attempting to stifle legitimate debate...”

Campaign groups

- ▶ There is no restriction on working with campaign groups.
- ▶ Forums can work with local and national campaign groups when their aims and objectives align.
- ▶ Campaign groups can do things that parent carer forums can't:
 - ▶ Protests
 - ▶ Petitions
 - ▶ Using the courts
 - ▶ Media campaigns
- ▶ <http://www.nnpcf.org.uk/coproduction-and-campaigning-a-guidance-document/>



Working with campaign groups

- ▶ Tell them what you are saying in meetings with decision makers
 - ▶ be transparent about what you can and cannot share
 - ▶ Explain how this is based on what PCFs are hearing and make sure they understand you are being brutally honest and coproducing to find way forwards
- ▶ Share information about the impact of planned changes to services based on PCF data
 - ▶ E.g. these changes to transport policy will mean 52 children spend an extra 30 minutes on the bus
 - ▶ Don't share anything that has confidentially share
- ▶ Share campaign group information on social media (making clear you are just sharing information, not endorsing the service)
- ▶ Compare notes and discuss tactics

Coproduction **vs** campaigning

You don't represent me!

You're in the local authority's pocket!

- Show how you are listening
- Be transparent about what you are saying and doing (feedback!)
- Ask what they would like you to say that you are not already saying

Whose side are you on?

You're only in it for the money!

Personal activity

- ▶ There is nothing to stop any member of a PCF engaging in campaign activities as an individual
- ▶ Just be aware of perceptions - not everyone will understand the difference between personal and forum activity



Forum governance

- ▶ There are no hard and fast rules
- ▶ You need to assess and manage each situation individually
- ▶ Make sure you stay true to your own forum's governance documentation and way of working
 - ▶ Constitution
 - ▶ Articles
 - ▶ Strategy
 - ▶ Values
 - ▶ Ethos





“We do this and
other things, not
because they are
easy but because
they are hard”

John F. Kennedy 1962