



## **Sefton Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) Conflict of Interest Policy**

**Approved by: SPCF Steering Group**  
**Approved on: May 2024**  
**Reviewed on: May 2025**  
**Next review due on:**

### **1. PURPOSE**

This policy and procedure is designed to ensure that any conflict of interest or potential conflict a volunteer, trustee or member of staff of Sefton Parent Carer Forum might have in relation to their membership of any group, committee or meeting which they attend on behalf of the Forum, is declared and dealt with so as to ensure that the Forum operates in line with best practice.

### **2. A CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

A conflict of interest may arise in the following circumstances:

2.1 A Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff (or their spouse or direct family member) is also a member, trustee, owner or employee of another organisation/company with similar objectives, particularly one with which there may be perceived to be any element of competition.

2.2 A Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff (or their spouse or direct family member) is also a member, trustee, owner or employee of another organisation/company which stands to gain financially or otherwise from decisions made by a group which the Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff attends on behalf of the Forum.

2.3 A Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff (or their spouse or direct family member) is also a member, trustee or employee of another group or organisation which enables them to influence strategic decisions in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families in Sefton.

2.4 A Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff (or their spouse or direct family member) has brought a legal challenge against the local authority or NHS services, e.g. through an appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal (formerly SENDIST) or a complaint to the Ombudsman.

*Note: It should be stressed that there is nothing wrong with a Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff being in any of these situations – a problem only arises if the person is involved in any decision which could be seen to conflict with their interest and fails to declare it.*

### **3. RESPONSIBILITY OF FORUM VOLUNTEERS, TRUSTEES OR MEMBERS OF STAFF**

It is always the responsibility of a Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff to declare any interest referred to above. In order to help volunteers, trustees or members of staffs to declare interests appropriately the Forum will:

- 3.1 Ask volunteers, trustees or members of staff to declare any interests at the beginning of any meeting organised by the Forum, where relevant
- 3.2 Discuss conflicts of interest issues when a Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff is considering joining the Steering Group of the Forum, a subgroup of the Forum, or a strategic/operational group which the volunteer, trustee or member of staff wants to join as a representative of the Forum
- 3.3 Provide new Steering Group members with a form on which they will declare any interest which is likely to conflict with their duty as a Steering Group member
- 3.4 Maintain a register of interests of Steering Group members, which is reviewed annually at the AGM

If a Forum volunteer, trustee or member of staff fails to declare an interest which is known to other Forum volunteers, trustees or members of staff, then they will declare it.

An investigation will be undertaken by the Steering Group to review any meetings attended or decisions that have been made that may have been compromised because of any unknown conflict.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Steering Group will announce the findings and confirm any actions required.

The Steering Groups decision is final and must be complied with.

### **4. WHEN A CONFLICT OF INTEREST ARISES**

When a conflict of interest arises between a Forum volunteer's, trustee's or member of staff's interest in the work of the Forum and a personal or professional interest elsewhere, the person will declare that interest and this will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting in question.

Attendees at the meeting will be asked if they would like to discuss the conflict-of-interest issue further, and the person in question may be asked to leave the meeting while this discussion takes place.

Parent Carer Representatives must promptly inform the Steering Group Chair if a conflict of interest has arisen which may affect their ability to represent the Forum at the strategic/operational group(s) they attend on behalf of the Forum.

They should not wait until the next meeting of the strategic/operational group(s) to declare their conflict of interest.

The person will be required to abide by the decisions of the Forum's Steering Group.

Decisions can be challenged through the Forum's complaints procedure.

A volunteer, trustee or member of staff with a declared conflict of interest will not be allowed to vote on any item to which their conflict of interest relates, nor will their attendance count towards a quorum at the meeting in question.

The volunteer, trustee or member of staff will not normally be asked to leave the meeting while the item in question is being discussed but may be asked to withdraw if the Chair considers that their presence may unduly influence the outcome of a decision.

Parent Carer Representatives with a declared conflict of interest may be asked to temporarily stand down from any strategic/operational groups they attend.

Once their conflict of interest has been resolved, they must review their situation with the Steering Group Chair before resuming their role.

Any declaration of conflict of interest made by a volunteer, trustee or member of staff of the Forum will be processed in line with the Data Protection Act, the General Data Protection Regulations and the Forum's own Data Protection Policy.