

CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY



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1	General update of all forum policies	29.11.21	HH & JS	Steering Group

Introduction

We, the Bristol Parent Carer Forum (BPC) Steering Group, are responsible for all actions carried out by The BPC Team when they are officially acting on behalf of BPC. We have drawn up this Code of Conduct in order that members, partners and funders have confidence in our work and in order that we avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute.

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 or Trustees, staff, and volunteer 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 will:

- use **positive, polite and assertive communication skills**: we ensure that what we say to each other, to our members and to our strategic partners is polite, clear, accurate, appropriate and always in the interests of the safe, smooth running of the Forum e.g. we devise and following guidance on how to discuss issues constructively
- 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; we carry out our actions according to our agreed policies and procedures
- **respect confidentiality**: we do not share any confidential information outside of the Steering Group in line with the **BPC GDPR and 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 [BPC Safeguarding Policy and Procedures](#); we maintain the confidence of our strategic partners where material discussed in their meetings is of a confidential nature.
- be **honest** and **transparent** with each other when our private lives may affect our ability to carry out our responsibilities appropriately e.g. we inform the steering group of any conflict

of interests that might affect our ability to exercise our responsibilities appropriately under this Code.

- **acknowledge** our professional and personal boundaries so that we can be useful to the membership e.g. we provide the parent carer perspective at meetings and acknowledge that while personal experiences can be used as illustrations, we represent the collective voice of parents without using meetings to resolve personal issues
- **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**
- take up **learning** and development opportunities & actively seek **support** when we face challenging situations; we accept constructive feedback from each other in order to do the best possible job.
- adhere to the **BPC Communication and Media Policy** to ensure **appropriate** communication

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

BPC is committed to respecting and representing our members fairly and we aim to represent all parent carers in Bristol **equally and equitably**. 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 **BPC's Equality and Diversity Policy**.

Political Activities

BPC'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 BPC's purpose and aims. Steering Group members are allowed to engage in political activities, including standing for election to public office, as long as it is legal for them to do so. However, participation is *entirely personal* and their political opinions do not represent BPC's position.

Campaigning

The following information comes from the NNPCF guidance document [Co-Production & Campaigning](#) We recognise that Bristol Parent Carer Forum 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. We acknowledge that campaigning is inconsistent with the ethos of parent carer forums in general.

Bristol Parent Carers 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. For example we may share a campaign group's petition where this aligns with forum objectives.

Bristol Parent Carers will not initiate, incite or run campaigns. Membership of a campaign group, or other organisation is an entirely personal matter as long as it is understood that this does not represent Bristol Parent Carers position and the member discloses the information in the Declaration of Interests.

Conflicts and Disclosure of Interests

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal interests – family, friendships, financial, or social factors – could compromise his or her judgment, decisions, or actions in BPC. e.g. Any member (or their close relative) receiving a personal or business benefit (other than Honorarium/Salary and expenses) as a consequence of BPC activity discloses this conflict as above. Where actions may be viewed as conflicting with their role BPC, the person must disclose these details to the Steering Group and this is recorded in the minutes of meetings. e.g. when a member is considering standing for election as an officer or a local representative role, including grant panels and/or tenders, or where membership of a campaign group could be constructed as counter to the aims of BPC.

Transparency (being completely open and frank) becomes important when dealing with both actual and potentially perceived conflicts of interest. Disclosure of a potential conflict of interest does not make it an actual conflict, but may help eliminate the perception. On the other hand, disclosure of an actual conflict of interest does not remove the conflict, but helps get it in the open to be properly addressed. It's important to disclose both potentially

perceived and actual conflicts of interest to allow the steering group to evaluate the matter and make the decision, rather than keep it to oneself and then create an ethical or legal situation. The individual cannot make the determination as to whether it is a conflict or not because he or she does not have an independent or objective point of view. “When in doubt, ask” is an old saying that makes a great deal of sense when working through conflicts of interest.

Whistle Blowing Policy

People working within an organisation are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the organisation. ‘Whistleblowing’ is viewed by BPC as a positive act that can make a valuable contribution to our efficiency and long-term success. It is not disloyal to colleagues or BPC’s to speak up. We are committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service and to help achieve these standards we encourage freedom of speech. For more details on this policy please see our [Whistle Blowing Policy](#).

Failure to Follow Code of Conduct please see visual guide to this process on [Google Drive](#).

NB This policy does not cover safeguarding complaints/concerns/incidents which are covered in the BPC [Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document](#)

This code of conduct details how all members of the BPC Team should conduct themselves - please pay careful consideration to the communication section for what to expect in terms of communicating with each other. Any individual or group who feels they have been discriminated against or harassed by a member of the BPC Team should report the event as an alleged breach of this Code of Conduct

Any complaints should be made to your line manager in the first instance. Where your complaint is about your line manager then raise your concerns with any one member of the steering group, who will bring this to the attention of the wider steering group members.

Complaints are treated in confidence and within the ‘**respect confidentiality**’ clause which is detailed on page 2 of this document. Anyone not abiding by that clause will find themselves in breach of this policy and may be faced with a conduct investigation themselves.

In the event of any complaint, initially the first step will be to talk with the person that you are complaining about, this will be fairly informal and a member of the steering group will attend to act as a mediator. All involved will be asked to focus on solutions to the problem or

concern. We encourage BPC team members to decide on objectives and work out the best way to achieve them, to put yourself in the shoes of the other person to try to work out their main concerns and what they may want and to consider how emails or letters may be received – read them back to yourself – will they help to resolve or entrench any disagreement? Are they focussing on resolution or on what has gone wrong?

Where this first step does not resolve the problem the next step will be to conduct an independent investigation that will be undertaken by 3 members of the steering group. You will be sent a letter informing you of the process and which members will be investigating the complaint. The investigation will commence 2 days after the further complaint is raised and will be concluded within 20 working days. With more complicated incidents, owing to the part time role of many on the steering group, it may be necessary to extend this time period; where this is the case, any BPC Team member subject to an investigation will be notified of this by writing via email.

It is standard practice to be asked to temporarily stand down until any complaint is resolved. This is a neutral and non-judgemental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the issue can be investigated properly.

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.

If BPC Team members are found to have seriously breached this Code of Conduct, BPC may find it necessary to instruct them to step down from their role.

APPENDIX 1

Nolan Committee Principles of Public Life

- **Selflessness:** take decisions in terms of BPC's values and mission and not to gain financial or material benefits for ourselves, our family and friends other than in the case of universal benefit.
- **Integrity:** not place ourselves under obligations to individuals or organisations that might influence us in the performance of our duties.
- **Objectivity:** to ensure that we represent, at all times, a range of disability, Special Educational Needs, cultures, social backgrounds and geographical areas.
- **Accountability:** accept accountability for our decisions and actions to BPC Members, the providers of public funds and other stakeholders, and submit ourselves to appropriate scrutiny.
- **Openness:** be open about all decisions and actions that we take. Where required give reasons for our decisions.
- **Honesty:** declare private interests relating to our duties and take steps to resolve conflicts arising in a way that protects BPC's reputation, values and mission.
- **Leadership:** we promote and support the above principles with effective leadership and by personal example