



Developing a Parent Carer-led Forum in Sutton

Service Specification

February 2026



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1. Background

The Sutton SEND Forum is a newly established Parent Carer Forum that was established in 2024 to gather the views of local families, from all communities, to work with service providers in the local area to design, develop and improve services for children and young people with SEND aged 0 – 25 in the local area.

For a variety of reasons, the number of parent/carer volunteers on the Sutton SEND Forum reduced significantly last year and the group no longer has the capacity to fulfil its role effectively. Whilst the group has some remaining parents, there is no active steering group and the Forum is currently inactive and without an appointed chair.

The Sutton SEND Forum is seeking to partner with an organisation that can provide capacity and expertise to re-establish a Sutton SEND Forum in the local area and to grow the Forum and establish the mechanisms by which parental voice and parental representation can be strengthened in the local area in line with the local area [Partnership Agreement](#).

The commission will be funded through the London Borough of Sutton (LBS). As Sutton SEND Forum is not a body corporate, LBS will act as commissioner but will not take part in decision making in relation to the preferred provider. Separately, the Sutton SEND Forum will use a proportion of their grant from the DfE towards the costs of hosting fees and any additional support in a separate agreement with the provider.

2. Purpose and objectives

The primary objective of this partnership is to develop a parent-carer-led forum that, over time, becomes an independent and sustainable entity with its own governance, structure, systems, and mechanisms.

The provider will support the Forum to:

- Facilitate an initial phase of rebuilding and recruiting parents to join the Sutton SEND Forum establishing interim governance arrangements and setting up basic operational systems
- Work in line with the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) participation grant recognising that strategic leadership by parents will



develop over time with the provider holding greater responsibility in the earlier stages of development.

- Operate using the "Four Cornerstones of Co-production" model: Welcome & Care, Value & Include, Communicate, and Work in Partnership.
- Ensure that parent carer experiences are at the heart of service development in Sutton.
- Provide feedback on services, offer constructive challenge and input into decision making and planning for future service provision.

3. Scope of services required by the partner

The provider will act as a host organisation, offering operational support, financial management, and developmental expertise that will enable members of the Sutton SEND Forum to focus on coproduction activities in the local area.

The provider will recruit and manage a dedicated worker to support the Sutton SEND Forum in the following ways and in line with the Department for Education grant and guidelines on the [Contact Parent Participation Handbook](#):

Forum Development and Growth

The Provider will provide expertise to expand the Forum's reach and capacity by:

- Growing the Sutton SEND Forum Steering Group of parent / carers that have a child or young person between birth to 25 years of age with additional needs and/or disabilities.
- Establishing appropriate governance arrangements and structures including regular meetings of the Sutton SEND Forum (suggested as at least once every half term).
- Establishing clear roles and responsibilities between the Sutton SEND Forum and the Provider.
- Establishing reporting processes to understand activity and outcomes of the work of the Forum
- Organising and running open meetings and events to help parent carers understand co-production and identify those willing to join the steering group.



- Developing a steering group of parent carers and facilitating training on roles, responsibilities, group dynamics, and decision-making.
- Ensuring information about the Forum is disseminated widely to key organisations and venues accessed by families as well as establishing effective communication channels with all families of children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 years.
- Ensuring communication materials reflect the diversity of the local population in Sutton (e.g. other languages, easy read).
- Ensuring a diverse forum membership and representation of diverse views from parent/carers from all backgrounds and sectors of the community

Finance and Grant Management

- Hold the DfE participation grant in their own bank account on behalf of the Forum.
- Support the Forum steering group to set up an action plan and budget annually and incorporate this into the DfE grant application.
- Manage the money, approve payments, and keep a record of all transactions supported by evidence.
- Provide the steering group with financial updates at every half-termly meeting.
- Support the steering group with the completion of the grant monitoring form and application form.
- Consider how the grant/other resources can be used for 'reward and recognition' activities - e.g. vouchers and or expenses to support coproduction activities in the local area.

Infrastructure and Support

The Provider will provide expertise to ensure the effective operations of the Parent Carer Forum by providing:

- Support for all of the business and meetings of the Sutton SEND Forum and Steering Group working towards an Annual General Meeting (AGM) within 18 months of forming.
- Administrative work and outreach on behalf of the Forum, including handling any HR issues, DBS checks or broader management support.
- Support in the development of all the necessary policies that the Sutton Forum will need in order to operate effectively.



- Ensure that the Forum's websites, social media, databases, documents, and phone systems are set up in the name of the Forum with shared usernames and passwords.
- Provide necessary office infrastructure, such as venues for meetings, printing, postage, stationery, as is necessary for the running of the forum.
- Ensure adequate insurance is in place to cover Forum activity.

4. Role of Sutton SEND Forum

While the Provider will provide the services above Sutton SEND Forum Steering Group will retain strategic control of the Sutton Send Forum.

The Steering Group will:

- Work with the Provider to develop a work plan, including defining priorities and setting a budget for the DfE grant.
- Approve spend and keep up to date with the grant budget.
- Represent the collective insights and concerns of a wide range of parent carers to local partners in the Council and NHS services.
- Actively take part in local area governance arrangements including the Sutton SEND Partnership inline with the [Partnership Agreement](#)
- Decide on which representatives from the Steering Group and or wider SEND Forum will attend local area strategic meetings.
- Actively encourage new parent carers to join the group (alongside the provider).

5. What is to be delivered / KPIs

The Provider will deliver the following overarching deliverables:

- Support the Sutton SEND Forum to establish and maintain a Steering Group that is representative of the parent/carer cohort in Sutton (ages and stages of CYP, complex needs / SEND support, experience of Specialist/AP and mainstream provision, parents/carers from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds).



- Membership Growth: to grow the existing Sutton SEND Forum membership over time to ensure a representative parental voice for the local area including young people with EHCPs but also those supported at SEN support level.
- Support the Sutton SEND Forum to establish a Steering Group that all actively contribute to local area co-production activities in a manageable and meaningful way including regular channels of communication with leaders in the local area.
- To support the Sutton SEND Forum to produce an Annual Survey of parent carer views to collect information on what is working well and what needs to change in the local area.
- Identify and take advantage of all engagement opportunities with the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) and attend Regional Network Meetings.
- Develop a clear outreach and engagement strategy that will ensure the Forum is able to actively engage with parents groups in Sutton
- Feedback Loop: Provide regular information and updates to the parent carer community about issues raised and how services are responding to the issues that are raised.
- Deliver a phased pathway to independence so that the Sutton SEND Forum is able to establish itself as a body corporate in it's own right in the future.

The provider will develop a summary report every quarter which sets out activity undertaken in line with the above deliverables, and reports on key KPI information (to be agreed between the provider, commissioner and Sutton SEND forum) which is likely to include:

- Number of wider engagement events held, and parents engaged via events and other fora
- Numbers of new steering group members each quarter
- Number of regular SEND forum meetings held and attendance at these
- Qualitative and thematic feedback from engagement work and from parent/carers survey responses

6. Safeguarding

Sutton Council is committed to promoting the welfare of all residents and ensuring that children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe from harm. The Provider shall:



- Ensure that all staff who work with families and young people are conversant with and comply with [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025](#), the [Sutton LSCP multi-agency threshold guidance](#)¹, and the [London Child Safeguarding Procedures](#)² as implemented in Sutton, including fully understanding what constitutes abuse and how to recognise and report it.
- Ensure that their staff satisfy the relevant competency framework(s) as set out under [London Child Safeguarding](#) procedures.
- Report all allegations, suspicions and incidents of abuse to the council's multi-agency safeguarding hub, [Children's First Contact Service](#)³
- In the event that immediate danger is identified urgent action must be taken and the emergency services contacted. Details of such actions must be recorded and reported to the relevant local authority team by the Provider. The Provider shall also report relevant concerns to any regulatory body.
- Comply with the Council's [LADO protocol](#),⁴ and requests made by the Council to suspend members of staff from working where serious allegations have been made against them, pending the outcome of an investigation.
- Be required to evidence compliance with [section 11 standards under the Children Act 2004](#)⁵ to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensure that there are regular updates and reviews safeguarding awareness, through management and support of staff and volunteers.

7. Confidentiality

The Sutton SEND Forum Steering Group and the Provider will each have a role in providing impartial, confidential and accurate information to parents and carers and other local organisations. The provider must ensure communication materials developed are in accessible formats, and ensure an inclusive approach is taken for families.

¹ <https://www.suttonlscp.org.uk/lscp-policy-practice>

² <https://www.londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/>

³ <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/w/report-a-concern-about-a-child>

⁴ https://www.sutton.gov.uk/w/the-role-of-the-lado?p_i_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DLADO

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/11/2022-07-01>



The Sutton SEND Forum Steering Group and the Provider, will on occasion be aware of confidential information. This could for example be in relation to the commissioning of services, information in relation to interview processes or other sensitive information.

Both the Provider and the Sutton SEND Forum Steering Group members and volunteers, will always uphold confidentiality and not share information that is confidential in any format.

The Sutton SEND Forum Steering Group and the Provider will ensure confidential information is always stored securely and is destroyed once no longer required.

Data Ownership: the membership data belongs to the Sutton SEND Forum and will transfer to them when the hosting agreement ends.

Compliance: All data will be stored and processed in line with the Forum's data policy.

8. Variations in the Specification

Either the Provider or the Sutton SEND Forum may propose a variation in the specification. Both parties will make the other aware of the need or desire for any forthcoming changes to the scope of services at the earliest opportunity.

Both Parties should where possible seek to identify innovations and different ways of working particularly where this improves the experience or gives better outcomes for children, young people and their families. Any significant changes to the services made will be documented and communicated to all parties. f

9. Disagreements

In the event of any disagreement both the host and steering group will meet to endeavour to find a way forward. In the event that a disagreement is related to concerns about the behaviour of a steering group member or a member of the host company, the Code of Conduct/relevant policies will be implemented.

If disagreements still cannot be resolved the steering group and host will seek outside impartial support such as the Contact adviser for the local area.

