Forum in schools project

“Through co-production, families, settings, and professionals work together so every child and young person can thrive."

Salford Parent Carer Forum

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Introduction

1. Programme overview

Salford Parent Carer Forum (SalfordPCF) has develop a Forums in Schools Project to support schools across Salford to establish meaningful, sustainable and inclusive Parent Carer Forums within their school community.

The programme will provide schools with a shared, flexible approach to building positive relationships between families, carers, children and young people and school staff. Together, we ensure that Parent Carer voices and lived experiences are valued as an important part of school development and decision-making.

The programme recognises that everyone faces challenges. By creating opportunities for open dialogue and co-production, we can all better understand experiences, strengths, challenges and aspirations, and use this insight together to improve practice.

Ultimately, the programme aims to improve experiences and outcomes for children, young people and their families, particularly those with SEND.

2. Our vision

"Working together with families and schools to create a place
where every child and young person can thrive."

The SalfordPCF Forums in Schools Project will create a bridge between families and schools, working together to build a culture where Parent Carers are partners in shaping decisions, from the start. By sharing knowledge and perspectives, we identify priorities and develop solutions together.

The programme will support schools to work with Parent Carers to:

- Improve home/school relationship
- Build positive partnerships
- Increase trust and transparency
- Have a shared responsibility
- Provide meaningful co-production
- Support SEND reforms

This reflects the principles of parent carer participation, where families and education providers work together to understand challenges and develop improvements.

3. What is a School Parent Carer Forum?

A School Parent Carer Forum is a group of parents and carers who work alongside the school to:

- Share experiences and perspectives.
- Identify common themes and priorities.
- Celebrate what is working well.
- Identify opportunities for improvement.
- Develop solutions together.
- Contribute to school development.
- Support better communication between families and school.
- Help ensure that the experiences of children and young people remain at the centre of discussions.

The forum will not replace existing school complaints procedures, governing bodies, SEND processes or individual support arrangements.
It will also not be used to resolve individual cases.
Instead, SalfordPCF will support the Schools Parent Carer Forum to identify themes and collective experiences that can inform school improvement. This is consistent with the wider role of SalfordPCF.

4. SalfordPCF's role

SalfordPCF will act as a facilitator, critical friend and strategic partner.

SalfordPCF will:

- Support school to establish their forum.
- Provide guidance and resources.
- Facilitate initial meetings.
- Support Parent Carer recruitment.
- Support meaningful engagement.
- Provide training around participation and co-production.
- Help schools understand parent carer lived experience.
- Support the development of action plans.
- Help identify themes and priorities.
- Share learning across participating schools.
- Support evaluation of the programme.
- SalfordPCF will not act as an advocate for individual families through the school forum. Its role will be to bring together collective experiences and use them constructively to support improvement.

5. The school's role

Participating schools will commit to:

- Identifying a senior member of staff to support the programme.
- Being open to working with Parent Carers through co-production and embracing new approaches
- Providing an appropriate space for meetings.
- Supporting recruitment and promotion of the forum.
- Listening to Parent Carer views.
- Sharing relevant information openly and appropriately.
- Being willing to consider and respond to feedback.
- Involving parent carers early in relevant decision-making.
- Agreeing realistic actions.
- Reporting back on progress.
- Supporting a culture of openness and mutual respect.

Importantly, participation should go beyond asking families for their views after decisions have already been made.

6. Training and development

SalfordPCF will offer participating schools and Parent Carers opportunities to develop their understanding of parent carer participation, co-production — including what it is and is not — and lived experience. Training will also cover partnership working, effective communication, SEND and inclusion, creating psychologically safe spaces for families, gathering and using parent carer voices, turning feedback into action, managing challenging conversations, and maintaining confidentiality and appropriate boundaries.

Training will help create a shared understanding that co-production is a relationship and a way of working, rather than simply a meeting or consultation exercise.

7. How the programme will work

SalfordPCF will work with a small number of schools initially to develop and pilot the programme. Each participating school will be supported through a structured development process.

Stage 1 – Introduction and Partnership

SalfordPCF will meet with school leaders to:

- Introduce the programme.
- Understand the school's current approach to parent engagement.
- Explore existing strengths and challenges.
- Identify key school priorities.
- Agree expectations and responsibilities.
- Identify a named member of school staff to support the forum.
- Agree how the forum will link with existing school structures.

A clear partnership agreement will be established between SalfordPCF and the school.

Stage 2 – Understanding the School Community

Before establishing the forum, SalfordPCF will support the school to understand the experiences of its parent carer community.

This may include:

- Parent Carer surveys.
- Listening sessions.
- Informal coffee mornings.
- Focus groups.
- SEND-specific engagement.
- Conversations with children and young people.
- Reviewing existing parent feedback.
- Identifying barriers to engagement.

This information will help identify the priorities that matter most to families.

Stage 3 – Establishing the Forum

SalfordPCF will support the school to recruit and establish a representative group of Parent Carers. Every effort will be made to ensure the forum reflects the diversity of the school community, including families of children and young people with different needs, ages and experiences.

The forum should be inclusive, accessible, welcoming, respectful, solution-focused, representative, and focused on children and young people.

Meetings could take place half-termly or termly, depending on the needs and capacity of the school. Where appropriate, meetings could include school staff, SENCOs, senior leaders, governors or other professionals, while ensuring that parent carers have sufficient space to speak openly.

Stage 4 – Developing an action plan

The forum will work with the school to develop a simple annual action plan.
This will identify:

Priority	What families have told us	What will we do	Who is responsible	Timescale	Impact

The action plan should remain solution-focused and achievable, with clear responsibilities for both the school and Parent Carers.

8. Measuring impact

The project's success will be measured through qualitative and quantitative feedback and data.
For Parent Carers, measures will include greater confidence in engaging with schools, improved understanding of school processes, stronger relationships, increased opportunities to influence decisions, and a clearer sense that their views are valued.

For schools, measures will include greater confidence in working with families, improved understanding of parent carer lived experience, increased use of co-production, better communication, and evidence that parent voice has influenced school development.

Outcomes for Children and Young People will include improved school experiences, a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion, increased participation, reduced barriers to learning, and improved wellbeing.

SalfordPCF will produce an annual Forums in Schools Impact Report summarising what families shared, what schools heard, the actions and changes that followed, what worked well, areas for improvement, examples of good practice, and the impact on children, young people and families.

9. Our commitment

We will work alongside schools in a constructive, respectful and solution-focused way, recognising the pressures faced by education settings while also ensuring that the experiences of children, young people and their families are heard.

The programme will be built around the principles of trust, respect, inclusion, lived experience, shared responsibility and meaningful co-production.

10. Is this something your school would be interested in developing with us or would you like to discuss this further?

If your school or setting is interested in taking part in the Forums in Schools Project, the person leading this work should email their expression of interest to info@salfordpcf.com, in agreement with the school's Headteacher/Principal.

We will then get in touch to discuss the next steps and how we can work together.

Contact details

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