Just Say Parents’ Forum
Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Just Say Parents’ Forum is a sub-group of the Borough wide Parents’ Board.

1. Name

The name of the sub-group shall be ‘The Just Say Parents Forum’ - for parents of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, hereafter referred to as The Just Say Parents Forum.

2. Purpose of the group

The purpose of the Forum is to:

- bring together local parents, the Council, the community and the voluntary sector to discuss issues related to services for disabled children and those with additional needs;
- to act as a consultation body on the development and delivery of services for disabled children (aged 0-25) and their families;
- to make recommendations to the Council and other partner agencies with respect to how to improve services for disabled children and those with additional needs and their families;
- where appropriate, to raise funds, apply for and receive grants and accept gifts for the benefit of families with children with disabilities or additional needs.
- to form and facilitate task groups for various activities as and when required.

3. Membership of the Forum

The Forum is open to any parent of a disabled child (0-25) or a child with additional needs or their representative who is a resident of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The Forum will be quorate when at least six members are present, including the chair and/ or vice chair. Membership of the Forum will be reviewed annually at the AGM and terms of office for the chair, vice-chair and treasurer circulated.

4. Membership terms and conditions

All members should be willing to:

- attend meetings regularly;
- be prepared to undertake relevant training and skills development, where appropriate;
• ensure that their own behaviour complies with the same vision, legislation, good practice and relevant policies and procedures, and that they act impartially rather than with self interest and do nothing to prejudice the interests of the group;
• respect the confidential nature of any information shared on a confidential basis by any of the partners or fellow members;
• promote genuine, constructive debate between parents, the local community, service providers and other interested groups to seek out how needs of children with additional needs/disabilities and their parents can best be met;
• to work towards the agreed overall aim of improving the support, advice and empowerment of parents with children with additional needs/disabilities living in the borough;
• ensure that all parties have an equal voice in the group, acknowledging that parents and the local community have a vital contribution to make in representing the needs of the local community.

5. Officers

The Forum shall have a committee consisting of:

• the Chair;
• the Vice-Chair;
• the Treasurer;

Officers shall hold office for a term of one year; but may be re-elected after this. Elections for Officers shall take place at the Annual General Meeting.

Elections will be decided upon the show of hands of all members of the Group with the positions going to those with the greatest number of votes.

Should an Officer resign during their term of office then an interim Officer may be appointed via an extra-ordinary meeting, with 21 working days notice given for such a meeting to take place.

Non-attendance at three consecutive meetings and/or any contravention of the membership terms and conditions set out above will result in the loss of office.

6. The Chair’s responsibilities

The Chair shall provide effective leadership to the Forum, to include:

• ensuring appropriate behaviour;
• timekeeping;
• managing meetings;
• signing off minutes of previous meetings once the LDD sub-group has agreed that these are a true record;
• ensure that new members are aware of their roles and responsibilities as a member of the group;
• keep in regular contact with the Parental Engagement Officer;
• act as a representative of the LDD sub-group at other meetings, conferences as appropriate.

7. Finance

Should the Forum raise or be in the receipt of funds, the Treasurer will open a bank or building society account in the name of The Just Say Parents’ Forum.

Any deeds, cheques etc relating to the Forum bank account shall be signed by at least two of the following committee members: Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer.

Any money acquired by the Forum including donations, contributions and bequests, shall be paid into this account.

The Treasurer will keep an accurate record of all the income and expenditure and present a full account for the AGM. The Forum’s accounts will be audited by the independent examiner appointed at the previous AGM.

The Forum shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies are used in accordance with the objectives of the group.

All funds must be applied to the objectives of the Forum and for no other purpose.

Should the Forum cease to exist then any remaining funds will be passed directly to the local authority to be used for the sole benefit of children with additional needs/disabilities and their families.

Members of the Forum shall not be entitled to remuneration.

8. Meetings

Meetings of the Forum will take place bi-monthly, excluding August. Extraordinary meetings may be called at any time if requested in writing by a minimum of three members of the Forum or in the event of an officer resignation.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chair or Vice-Chair to chair all meetings, or an interim chair if elected.

An Annual General Meeting of the Forum will take place once per year. A notice of the meeting including date, time and place will be sent to all members of the Forum at least
two weeks in advance. Items for the agenda of the meeting may be suggested by any member of the group, but must be agreed by the Chair and/or Vice-Chair.

All members are entitled to vote at the AGM. Voting shall be made by a show of hands on a majority basis. In the case of a tied vote, the Chair shall make the final decision.

9. Voting rights and procedures

Every member of the Forum is entitled to one vote when the vote is by a show of hands.

Where any matter is put to a vote, the decision shall be that supported by the majority share of votes. In the case of a tied vote, the Chair will have the casting vote.

Where, in the view of the Chair, there is a conflict of interest, Forum members will be asked to abstain from voting.

The Chair of the Forum will be able to make decisions on urgent matters. These ‘Chair’s actions’ will be ratified by the group at the next Forum meeting.

Decisions by the Forum may only be carried when the meeting is quorate.

10. Declarations of interest

Forum members shall declare any vested interest. A vested interest is one that is deemed to directly benefit a group member and any other organisation to which they belong, or one that in denying a proposal from another party benefit may accrue to a Forum member, their child and or any other organisation to which they belong.

A register of interests must be compiled and updated annually. If a member has an interest such as the one defined above that is not on the register, or not known to the Chair of a meeting where it becomes relevant, they must declare the interest at the start of the meeting or as soon as it becomes clear that it is relevant.

The Chair will decide whether interests declared in the register or at any other time are such that member should be excluded from discussion or decision-making in respect of that item.

11. Dealing with disputes

The Forum is intended to be a collaborative, co-operative body and problems or issues should normally be debated and resolved at group meetings. If parties feel that these have not been resolved, the following process should be followed:

- the parties concerned should meet with the Chair who will assist in finding and recommending a solution;
• a special meeting of the Forum is convened with papers prepared representing the different views. The Chair will present a possible solutions paper. If a solution cannot be agreed on after a vote then the Chair will have a second casting vote to resolve the matter;
• if the dispute is with the Chair, the Vice-Chair will lead in resolving the issue. If this cannot be resolved the issue will be taken to the relevant Senior Council Officer.

12. Servicing meetings

All decisions and actions are to be recorded within the minutes which will be agree by the Chair. Minutes of meetings are to be sent out within two weeks of a meeting being held.

Agendas, minutes, proposed amendments to the constitution and other documentation will be sent out at least one week before the next meeting to enable members to absorb the content and consider pertinent issues. No decision relating to finance or the constitution may be taken where the relevant materials have not been distributed as above.

Confidential agenda items will be dealt with in a closed session and such items will be marked confidential on the agenda and recorded in separate confidential minutes, which will not be displayed or distributed.

All papers distributed are to be kept on file with minutes, which are signed and dated. These papers should be kept as a record of The Just Parents’ Forum meetings for seven years.

13. Confidentiality

The role of the group will be strategic and that no confidential information relating to individual members will be shared.

14. Dissolution

The Forum may be dissolved if deemed necessary by the members in a majority vote at a special meeting. Any assets or remaining funds after debts have been paid shall be passed directly to the Local Authority for the sole benefit of children with additional needs/disabilities and their parents.
Agreed on behalf of .................................................. Parents’ Forum

Signature.............................................. Name....................................................
Office.............................................. Date....................................................

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Office.............................................. Date....................................................