Parent Carer Forum

23/09/2026

Children and Young People's Services

Our proposal for a new Parent Carer Forum

Guidance outlines we must have an independent and representative forum that enables parent carers to influence decisions, co-produce improvements, and strengthen services, ensuring the voices of children, young people and families shape local SEND provision and improve outcomes.

A starting point

Former forum members have come forward and would like to work with Suffolk and partners to create a new forum.

An umbrella principle

Connect with existing parent carer groups and networks, drawing together different voices without replacing or duplicating them.

Independent support

Contact have identified an associate to support the new forum, Suffolk County Council and the ICB.

Proposed foundations

Parent carer voice

Led and shaped through parent carer experience.

Inclusion

Reach the breadth of voices and communities across Suffolk.

Connection

Work with existing groups and trusted local networks.

Transparency

Clear accountability and fully costed use of funding.

Aim: a constructive, sustainable relationship with parents and carers, with independence, support and accountability from the outset.

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Building a forum that represents Suffolk's families

The detailed model will be co-produced, informed by wider parent carer insight and supported by partners

Hear a broad range of voices



- Reach across Suffolk's places and communities
- Include families with different experiences and circumstances
- Create accessible ways for people to contribute
- Actively seek voices that are less often heard

Connect rather than duplicate



- Build relationships with existing parent carer groups and networks
- Use trusted local organisations to widen participation
- Bring different perspectives together through the umbrella approach
- Complement existing routes for engagement

Turn insight into influence



- Bring parent carer experience into partnership discussions
- Identify shared themes while respecting different experiences
- Show families how feedback has informed thinking
- Use wider survey insight to shape future priorities

Build trust from the outset



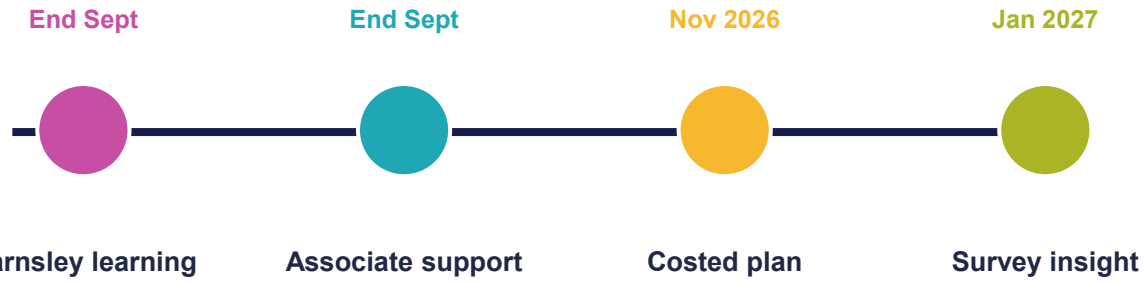
- Be clear about the forum's role and independence
- Provide transparent information about decisions and funding
- Agree how the forum, partners and networks will work together
- Review representation as the forum develops

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Next steps

A staged route to development, shaped by insight and discussion

Proposed next steps



The Knowing Works survey will bring in wider parent carer insight to shape the forum's future work. SCC and partners will also consider the support needed for safe and sustainable development.

Our key building blocks:

1. Representation
2. Belonging and trust
3. Connection