



CODE OF CONDUCT

WHAT IS A CODE OF CONDUCT?

The Steering Group has responsibility for all actions carried out by staff and Steering Group members and any other member representing the Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum (HSPCF).

This policy governs the internal operations of Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum while hosted by City & Hackney Carers Centre. Legal and financial responsibilities held by the Host remain subject to the Hosting Agreement.

The conduct of Steering Group members and staff and any other individual parent and carer who are acting on behalf of the HSPCF should give our members, partners, and funders confidence.

All individuals covered by the Code of Conduct need to show integrity; ensure actions are transparent and avoid any suggestion of improper influence. There must be no abuse of authority in our actions. All Steering Group members and staff must uphold the spirit, as well as the wording of this Code of Conduct.

This 'Code of Conduct' includes the findings of the Nolan Committee on "Standards in Public Life" and goes beyond these. The term 'we' and 'us' have been used throughout to show that the Code of Conduct applies equally to all individuals covered by this Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct applies to all HSPCF members, including Steering Group members, volunteers, staff, and individuals acting on behalf of HSPCF.

Findings of the Nolan Committee

The seven principles of public life identified by the Nolan Committee guide the content of our Code of Conduct.

1. **Selflessness:** to take decisions in terms of HSPCF's aims and objectives (see constitution) and not to gain financial or material benefits for ourselves, our family and friends other than in the case of universal benefit.
2. **Integrity:** not to place ourselves under obligations to individuals or organisations that might influence us in the performance of our duties.
3. **Objectivity:** to ensure that we represent, always, a range of disability, Special Educational Needs, cultures, social backgrounds, and geographical areas.
4. **Accountability:** to accept accountability for our decisions and actions to HSPCF Members, the providers of public funds and other stakeholders and submit ourselves to appropriate scrutiny.
5. **Openness:** to be open about all decisions and actions that we take and where needed to give reasons for our actions.
6. **Honesty:** to declare private interests relating to our duties and take steps to resolve conflicts arising in a way that protects HSPCF's reputation, aims, and objectives.
7. **Leadership:** to promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Disclosure of Interest

This covers circumstances where an individual (or their close relative) could, in theory, receive a personal or business benefit (other than Honorarium/Salary and expenses) because of HSPCF activity.

There are two main examples where a benefit could occur:

- A Duality of Interest: where the circumstances could potentially bring about some personal or business gain.
- A Conflict of Interest: where a HSPCF interest and a personal/business/other Voluntary Sector interest occur over the same matter.
- Any interest must be disclosed to the Chair of HSPCF.

- Where the Chair has an actual or perceived conflict of interest, the declaration shall be made to the Vice-Chair. Where both are conflicted, the matter shall be referred to the Host Organisation for oversight.
- Where all Steering Group members, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, are conflicted in relation to governance decisions, the matter shall be referred to the Host Organisation for independent oversight or determination.

Aims and Objectives

Our work and reputation rely on us upholding and promoting HSPCF's aims and objectives. We should all work to the same aims and objectives. We must incorporate these in our conduct in relation to HSPCF.

Political Activities

HSPCF's work may take it into the political arena, but we must ensure that we show our non-political nature and are impartial about party politics. When making any political representation, HSPCF must clearly be seen as presenting a balanced case in support of HSPCF's aims and objectives.

Members may engage in political activities, including standing for election to public office, if it is legal to do so. However, participation will be entirely on their own behalf, and their political opinions will not represent the HSPCF's position.

Equality and Diversity

HSPCF is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in every area. Our aim is that everyone should be treated fairly and be equally respected and represented. The aim is to ensure that the Steering Group of the HSPCF reflects its membership.

Hospitality

We may not ask for hospitality. Occasional modest hospitality is allowed.

Personal Conduct

As a representative of parents and carers in Hackney, each Steering Group member has clear responsibilities and requirements in relation to personal conduct. Any member who represents the HSPCF must strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of our wider membership and partners with whom we work.

Members must not bring the HSPCF into disrepute while acting in a representative capacity. As a representative of HSPCF, your actions and behaviour may be subject to additional scrutiny.

As a representative of HSPCF you must ensure that in your conduct and activity you:

- Conduct yourself appropriately for the duty or function that you are carrying out or attending, which includes treating all of those you meet courteously and with dignity and respect.
- Respect diversity and diverse cultures and values.
- Are honest and trustworthy.
- Communicate in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way.
- Respect confidential information and do not share any information that is confidential outside of the Steering Group or meeting at which you are present.
- Ensure that the views of parents and carers are fully and accurately represented. Whilst personal experience may inform this, you must not rely entirely on your own experiences, views, and judgements, but be fully representative of the wider membership.
- Declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and make sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice.
- Do not behave in a way which would call into question your suitability to be a representative of HSPCF.

A representative of HSPCF has a duty to inform the Chair of HSPCF about any personal difficulties that might affect their ability to exercise their responsibilities appropriately. As a representative of the HSPCF, you are expected to work in partnership at the highest level with council officers; any personal circumstance which may pose a conflict for individuals and therefore for the organisation, must be declared to the Chair at once.

The following are examples of such circumstances:

- Any allegation that an individual may have committed, or is being investigated in relation to having committed, a crime.
- Any child protection or safeguarding concern relating to children and/or vulnerable adults.
- Any significant challenge between individuals and the council (e.g., where individuals may end up in a litigious relationship).
- Other similar circumstances.

In these situations, it will be standard practice for the representative to cease such representation until the issues are resolved in agreement with the Chair of the HSPCF. This is a neutral and non-judgmental position, designed to protect the organisation, individual and to ensure the individual involved can focus all their attention on the issue at hand.

It is felt necessary however to insist on this protocol to safeguard both the HSPCF and the individual involved.

Consideration will be given by the Steering Group as to how the roles and responsibilities of that individual will be covered in their absence.

FAILURE TO FOLLOW CODE OF CONDUCT

We recognise that failure to follow this Code of Conduct may damage HSPCF and will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

Any alleged breach of this Code of Conduct will be managed solely following the HSPCF Complaints, Grievance, Internal Disciplinary and Procedures Policy. The Complaints Officer (or alternative where required under that policy) will oversee due process in accordance with that policy.

Outcomes may include training, restorative action, suspension, or termination of role, depending on the severity and impact of breach, as set out in the relevant policy.