



Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum

Registered Charity 1141060

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is the LPCF? We are an independent small charity run by volunteers made up of parent carers of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

Q: Does it cost to join your network? No. It is totally free. There are no catches either. We do not share your information – we keep it completely confidential.

Q: Why should I join your network? Being part of a community that is well informed and able to support fellow parent carers is beneficial to families in many ways. Some parents just need information whilst others prefer to talk to others like them. Whatever you need, we try and help whichever way we can including signposting you accordingly.

Q: What type of support do you provide? By joining our network you can dip in and out of using our support whenever and however you wish. This could be to obtain information on a wide array of subjects empowering you to have an informed choice; social events where feelings of isolation may be broken down – you are not alone; feel connected with other parent carers in the county and indirectly, across the nation; gain control in being able to influence local decisions and have a voice about services being provided for families; learn how to keep yourself well whilst juggling the demands of your family; feel valued as a contributor to the community. Parent carers choose what type of support suits them.

Q: Who else is in your network? Our network is made up of parent carers, professionals and interested parties.

Q: Do you share my details with anyone else? Definitely not. All our network members remain completely confidential. We have a strong reputation for complete confidentiality with our network and service providers respect this.

Q: How long can I stay a member? Once a parent, always a parent; no matter how old your child becomes. So if you are a parent or carer of a child or grown up dependant with a special need or disability, then you can become a network member. As life throws up different experiences along your way, you can use our network for support and information as you require.

Q: How do you influence the provision of services? It is true that there is strength in numbers. Many people have unique life experiences raising a dependant with special needs but there are similar experiences. It is only when these experiences are collated or when parents meet together and share information that they can break down the feelings of isolation and start to realise that there are common factors. From time to time, the LPCF will put out a request to the network for feedback of these experiences. This information is collated, published and presented to service providers for appropriate action. Historically, the most common difficulties raised by parents on our network are issues related to education, social care and health respectively.

Q: How would you represent me? We have specially trained our dedicated volunteers (who are also parent carers) to know how to represent our network. Our group takes in everyone's views through the various mediums such as face to face meetings, emails and website comments. These are then represented to service providers like Lincolnshire County Council and NHS Lincs. Collated views from parents on our network make a very compelling voice and as we have an extensive number of families on our network, it is easy for us to find out what the general experience is for certain services and to influence commissioners accordingly.

Q: How do you help parents? We provide lots of opportunities to find out information through various ways. Here are some examples:-

- We hold coffee mornings around Lincolnshire where parents and carers can relax in an informal setting and talk to other parents. We also inform parents of the work we are doing and any information relevant to their needs.

- Evening meetings such as *parent-2-parent* events are held especially for those parent carers who struggle to make it to our daytime ones.
- We organise events and conferences, where parents are given the opportunity to speak to professionals about the issues that affect them.
- We organise events on subjects specifically requested by parents wherever and whenever possible. At our events, we also provide lots of opportunities for parents to find out about other organisations who can help them.
- Our website is regularly updated with useful information to help you and your family. The library is also continually being added to with other organisation's documents as well as our own published reports that are informed by parent carers on our network.
- We provide regular email bulletins providing parents, carers and professionals with current information relevant to their needs e.g. events, consultations, changes in legislation, etc.
- We also continue to obtain your experiences through many avenues whether it is through email consultation, coffee mornings, website (through 'Your say' page), event feedback or otherwise. Our volunteer representatives have been able to collate your experiences and represent parents and their families at policy making meetings.
- With parents' opinions being voiced through our representatives at local, regional, and national levels, services have continued to be shaped in the way that would be most beneficial to families and in particular, the dependants with special needs. This saves money and is a more efficient way for service providers to operate, whatever the financial climate may be like, by targeting what is required and useful for families and avoiding wasteful or unwanted services.

Q: Can you give some specific examples of what you have represented parent carers on? Since our group was founded in 2006, we have been able to influence service provision in many areas. Here are some examples:

- We actively participated in the implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 which has brought widespread reforms in the area of Special Educational Needs and Disability.
- We hosted Home to School Transport consultations with parent carers and Lincolnshire County Council. A report was published detailing the feedback from parent carers and this was presented to the Home to School Transport Project Board.
- We reported to the Care Quality Commission on matters relating to health and social care informed by our network's feedback.
- We completed national consultations and surveys reflecting our network's experiences.
- We held a Health Consultation on the lack of Paediatricians in Lincolnshire. A written report was published and the local MP made representations on our behalf in parliament.
- We represented parent carers' views at the highest level with the County Council on the subject of abolishing statements of educational needs in the past. Although the devolution of SEN funds still went ahead, we were able to secure some amendments to the original plan, and more importantly we brought about consultations with parent carers to have their views heard by the Local Authority. Such consultations were not going to happen without our direct intervention.

Q: Can I just be on the network rather than get actively involved? Yes; most of our families are on our network to receive up to date information. However, some parents feel that they can contribute a little time to volunteer and help out with certain things such as leaflet drops in their local area or host coffee mornings. Some volunteer to represent the network of parent carers at strategic meetings. If you have an inclination and some capacity to help make a difference, then please contact us; we would like to hear from you.

Our Contact Details:

Check out our website for further information on events and activities or contact us. If you phone please leave a message and we will return your call.

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