

# SPCN Code of conduct - Draft

## 1. WHAT IS A CODE OF CONDUCT?

The Management Board has responsibility for all actions carried out by Suffolk Parent Carer Network (SPCN) Members. As a result the conduct of Management Board Members and any other individual parent carers who are acting on behalf of the SPCN should give our 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 Management Board Members are required to 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 to Management Board Members and parent carers equally.

## 2. FINDINGS OF THE NOLAN COMMITTEE

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

- **Selflessness:** take decisions in terms of SPCN's values and mission and not to gain financial or material benefits for ourselves, our family and friends other than in the case of universal benefit.
- **Integrity:** not place ourselves under obligations to individuals or organisations that might influence us in the performance of our duties.
- **Objectivity:** to ensure that we represent, at all times, a range of disability, Special Educational Needs, cultures, social backgrounds and geographical areas.
- **Accountability:** accept accountability for our decisions and actions to SPCN Members, the providers of public funds and other stakeholders, and submit ourselves to appropriate scrutiny.
- **Openness:** be open about all decisions and actions that we take. Where required give reasons for our decisions.
- **Honesty:** declare private interests relating to our duties and take steps to resolve conflicts arising in a way that protects SPCN's reputation, values and mission.

- Leadership: promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

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### **3. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

3.1 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) as a consequence of SPCN activity. There are two main examples where a benefit could occur

3.1.1. A Duality of Interest. Where the circumstances could potentially bring about some personal or business gain;

3.1.2 A Conflict of Interest. Where a SPCN interest and a personal, business or other Voluntary Sector interest occurs over the same matter.

3.2 Both types of interest must be disclosed. The Co-Chairs are responsible to ensure that annually members complete a Declaration of Interests Form. These forms will be held in a register that is open to public scrutiny.

3.3 Members are obliged to declare any interests at the beginning of any meeting organised by Suffolk Parent Carer Network and this will be minuted. Attendees at the meeting will be asked if they would like to discuss the conflict of interest issue further, and the member in question may be asked to leave the meeting while this discussion takes place.

3.4 Upon conclusion of the discussion, the Co-Chairs will summarise the points raised and any decisions made will be minuted. If there is split opinion, management board members present in the meeting will be invited to vote. In the event of a hung vote the Co-Chairs will have the final say. The member in question will then be informed of the outcome and must abide by the decision reached.

3.5 A member with a declared interest will not be allowed to vote on any item to which their conflict of interest relates, nor will their attendance count towards a quorum at the meeting in question. The member will not normally be asked to leave the meeting while the item in question is being discussed, but may be asked to withdraw if the Co-Chairs consider that their presence may unduly influence the outcome of a decision.

### **4. AIMS AND VALUES**

4.1 Our work and reputation relies on us upholding and promoting SPCN's aims and values.

4.2 We should all work to the same aims and uphold the same values. We are required to incorporate these in our conduct in relation to SPCN.

### **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

5.1 SPCN 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 SPCN reflects the population of Suffolk.

## **6. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

- 6.1 SPCN's work may take it into the political arena but we must ensure that we demonstrate our non-political nature, and are impartial about party politics. When making any political representation, SPCN must clearly be seen as presenting a balanced case in support of SPCN's key objectives.
- 6.2 Members can engage in political activities, including standing for election to public office, as long as it is legal to do so. However, participation will be entirely on their own behalf and their political opinions will not represent the SPCN's position.
- 6.3 The officers will discuss conflicts of interest issues when a SPCN's member is considering standing for election as an officer or local representative role, a subgroup of SPCN, or a strategic/operational group which the member wants to join as a representative of SPCN, including grant panels and/or tenders. The officers' decision is final and must be complied with.

## **7. HOSPITALITY**

- 7.1 We may not solicit hospitality. Occasional modest hospitality is allowed.
- 7.2 Hospitality must always be recorded in the register held by the Treasurer. Anyone who has received hospitality must record this in the register as soon as practicable.

## **8. PERSONAL CONDUCT**

- 8.1 As a representative of parent carers in Suffolk, the Management Board Member Role has clear responsibilities and requirements in relation to personal conduct, and expects any member who represents the Forum must strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of our wider membership, and partners whom we work with.
- 8.2 You must not bring the SPCN into disrepute while acting in your representative capacity. As a management board member, your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions in both your public and private life might have an adverse impact on your own role, and the SPCN.
- 8.3 Those who represent the SPCN must ensure that in their conduct and activity they:  
Conduct ourselves appropriately for the duty or function that we are carrying out or attending, which includes treating all of those we come into contact with courteously and with dignity and respect.
  - Only carry out those activities as agreed with the Management Board and Co-Chairs
  - Respect diversity and different 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 Management Board
- Are reliable and dependable, or provide clear information to the Co-Chairs if they are experiencing challenges that may prevent them from being so.
- Ensure that the views of parent carers are fully and accurately represented. Whilst personal experience may inform this, we must not rely entirely on own experiences, views and judgements, but be fully representative of the wider membership.
- Honour work commitments, agreements and arrangements and, when it is not possible to do so, explaining why to the Co-Chairs and other management board members as appropriate
- Do not use your position within SPCN to lobby or advocate on behalf of yourself or another parent carer to the council officers or other statutory services
- Declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and making sure that they do not influence your judgement or practice
- Not behave in a way, in work or outside work, which would call into question your suitability to be a representative of other parent carers

8.4 Management Board members must inform the Co-Chairs about any personal difficulties that might affect your ability to exercise your responsibilities appropriately. As members of the Management Board are expected to work in partnership at the highest level with various local authority and statutory bodies, any personal circumstance which may pose a conflict for individuals, and therefore for the organisation must be declared to the Co-Chairs immediately

The following are examples of types of 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 Government agencies (e.g. where individuals may end up in a litigious relationship with a central or local Government Department)
- Other similar circumstances

8.5 In these situations, it will be standard practice to ask the Management Board member to temporarily stand down until the issues are resolved. This is a neutral and non judgemental position, designed to protect the organisation and the individual, and to ensure the individual involved is able to focus all of their attention on the issue at hand. It is felt

necessary however to insist on this protocol to safeguard both the SPCN and the individual involved.

- 8.6 Consideration will be given as to how the roles and responsibilities of that individual will be covered in their absence, and whether a temporary replacement should be sought.
- 8.7 In the event that the investigation involves the Chair, then the investigation will be carried out by one of the Co-Chairs and one of the other officers. Their findings, conclusion and decision are final and must be complied with.

## 9. GENERAL

- 9.1 Where our personal conduct may be viewed as conflicting with the work of SPCN, we are required to disclose details to the Co-Chairs, and enter details in the Disclosure of Interest Register. Advice on any matter in this Code of Conduct should be sought from the Co-Chairs.
- 9.2 In any case of uncertainty, we should always make an entry in the Disclosure of Interest Register and / or seek advice and make a record of this.
- 9.3 We should carry out our responsibilities in accordance with SPCN's policies and procedures.
- 9.4 All of us represent SPCN.

## 10. FAILURE TO FOLLOW CODE OF CONDUCT

- 10.1 We should recognise that failure to follow this Code of Conduct may damage SPCN and will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.
- 10.2 In the event of an alleged breach of the Code, any investigation or action will be initiated by the Co-Chairs. Based on the outcome of the investigation, a range of actions may be taken ranging from seeking appropriate training and support for the individual member, to asking them to permanently step down, depending on the severity and impact of any alleged breach.

This SPCN Code of Conduct was approved by SPCN Management Board:  
To be reviewed: June 2017

### **Linked documents:**

Declaration of Interest Forms to be completed annually by each member of the Steering Group to be held in the Register of Interests.

Hospitality Register held by Treasurer.