**Top Tips for Minimising Conflict for Parent Carer Forums**

For help with any of the resources mentioned in this sheet contact your Parent Participation Adviser

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Conflict** | **Prevention** | **Management strategies** |
| **Conflict between Committee members** | * Code of conduct including values and principles for the forum * Training in committee, chairing/facilitation skills * Induction pack and training for new committee members – be clear about the purpose of the committee and role of the forum * Use flip chart/post it notes to capture people’s views and give everyone a chance to speak * Break up the group into smaller groups to capture ideas, break up cliques and build on the creative intelligence of the group * Take regular breaks * Make sure your meeting venue is light, airy and comfortable – dark, airless rooms can create a similar atmosphere! * Build in time for people to get to know each other * Use an external facilitator to bring a fresh feel to the group * Learn coaching techniques and questions * Conflict of interest policy * Complaints policy * Clear roles and responsibilities for committee members * Ensure people keep to the agenda and ensure that the chair helps people keep on track, clarifies key points made and ensures that the committee make clear decisions. | * Good facilitation techniques such as ensuring everyone has a chance to speak, asking the whole committee what other solutions/ideas etc. – ensure everyone has a chance to speak, use post it notes or flip chart to get the committee to write down suggestions or preferences * If discussion becomes heated or you need time to think clearly – take a break – have some refreshments * Is it appropriate to remind people of the code of conduct * If it’s personal conflict spilling over into the committee meeting – remind people of the boundaries of the meeting * Remind people of the role of the committee and purpose of the forum * Come back to the discussion either later in the meeting or at a future meeting * Use flipchart to capture key points, where there’s agreement and where there are differences * Be clear in the agenda items where you want the committee to make decisions, give ideas, feedback or if it’s an information item * Use voting – either as a show of hands or on post it notes to make decisions |
| **Conflict between the forum and local authority** | * Draw up a Co-production agreement jointly with your local authority that includes a section on how you’ll approach situations where you don’t agree * Set up informal meetings into your work with the local authority to build up relationships and communication * Develop a form for authorities to request parent representatives * Develop a parent representatives code of conduct * Ask the local authority to provide you with information about the strategic decision making groups * Share training with the local authority lead officers on co-production and participation * Develop an annual plan of participation and co-production jointly with the local authority * Ensure that you keep the local authority informed about number and key statistics about your membership, the work you do to engage the wider networks of parents, training you provide, information, social media and provide statistical evidence about key issues via feedback from events, surveys, online feedback through social media etc. – let them know about your great work and provide statistical evidence about how the forum is reaching out and including other parents as well as parents views and issues. | * Ask the person concerned for an informal chat about the differences * Identify the facts of the situation – separate out facts from perception and emotion – what was said, what was done – what’s policy and what’s practice? * Understand their position and the challenges they’re facing with reduced budgets, fewer staff etc. – were there time pressures, budget pressures? * What are the learning points for the forum and be clear about what you expect the local authority to do and ask yourself if it’s realistic * If the issues are really important and you can’t work it out directly then discuss using a mediator or external facilitator to work through the issues and help you reach agreement |
| **Conflict between the forum and other support groups** | * Agree how you will involve other groups in your forum such as setting up a group champion to build two way communication with the forum or be part of the forum committee, share training with groups, promote their events as well as asking them to promote the forum activities * Ensure there is clear information on your website and social media about the role of the forum, how you work, how local groups can benefit from working with the forum and how the forum complements the work of local groups rather than competing with them. * Arrange to meet with local group leaders on a one to one basis, share information and ask about how they work and how you might work together – they may want to be involved as a parent representative or part of your committee or may just want to share information regularly – find what will work for them | * Be clear about the role of the forum and how you can both benefit from sharing information and improving communication * Listen to their concerns to understand the key issues and ask them what they want the outcome to be – you may not be able to give it but it is good to be clear * You could use a trusted third party such as the local authority, a mediator or facilitator to help talk things through and reach agreement. * If you still can’t resolve the issues or they have unrealistic expectations of what the forum can provide and they still want to complain then you ask them to make a formal complaint in writing – show them your complaints policy. |
| **Conflict with parents – either members or non-members** | * Have clear information about the role of the forum on your website and social media as well as written information in leaflets and newsletters * Explain what parent participation is and isn’t – so it’s working in partnership with the local authority to make decisions together about how services are designed, commissioned and delivered – it’s not about campaigning * Inform parents about the work you’re doing and your successes – what have you been involved in and how have you made a difference – “you said, we did” * Have a compliments and complaints policy in place and publicise it * Be open about opportunities to get involved and how other parents can make a difference * Put on training for parents about participation and co-production or other topics of interest * Develop a membership officer role – someone who is friendly and approachable, can spend time listening to parents and informing them about the work of the forum | * Make sure you’re in the right frame of mind and have energy to deal with the situation – suggest another time or a phone call to give yourself breathing space * Listen to the person to understand the issues and summarise the issues so you’re clear about what is being said * If someone is rambling and not being clear then check on facts – what was said – what was done, when, by who * Is the issue the forums responsibility to resolve – if not signpost them to the appropriate place or person * If it’s about one person in particular then have they spoken to the person directly to try to resolve the issue with them first? * If it is related to the forum – what does the person want to change/ have happen – is it realistic or achievable? * Are their concerns valid – does the forum need to reflect on what it’s doing, how it’s doing it? * Do the issues need to involve other people in creating a solution? |