

Managing your Parent Carer Participation Grant

And other useful tips to help you manage the day to day running of your forum

Introduction

To help you to manage your grant effectively during the year, we have produced the following guide which is sent out by the grants team with the confirmation that your grant application for 2024/2025 has been successful.

We suggest that you keep a printed or electronic copy of this document to hand to act as a handy reference point through the year and to add information to it as and when required.

The guide covers how to manage your forum's records and how to organise your invoices; along with practical advice and tips on expenses claim forms, grant variations, good governance, and more.

Some of the information contained below may appear in the grant application, monitoring guidance or conditions of grant. This document is not designed to replace these documents, but to assist your forum with day-to-day matters, and to help you to manage your grant effectively. If you refer to this document regularly, it will help you to have the right information prepared ahead of the grant monitoring in April 2025, and to deal with other situations as and when they arise.

This guide is intended to complement, and not to replace the advice of your Parent Carer Participation Adviser. If you have any queries or are unsure of anything, please contact your Adviser or a member of the grants team for further personalised support.

The important documents all forums need to be aware of to manage the grant are:

The conditions of grant, contained and agreed within your grant application

- HM Government Code of Conduct for Grant Recipients
- Fraud guidance
- Grant application and monitoring guidance
- Managing your grant with proof of expenditure guidance (this document)
- Budget spreadsheet

The above documents are available on the grants & monitoring page of our website, apart from the conditions of grant which are contained within your completed grant application.

As a forum, you also have a subscription to Community Matters Yorkshire for guidance on governance matters, and each forum has eight places with CiC for key forum members to access legal, family, and HR helplines and support, as well as personal wellbeing support and access to counselling. If you don't have the details of how to access these – contact your PCP Adviser for further details. For further information on many of the topics included in this guide, Contact has a [YouTube channel](#) for parent carer forums which houses all forum webinars and online learning sessions.

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Pre-committing grant spend

Your forum should not commit to any expenditure in 2024/25 or use any underspend from the previous grant year until you have received formal confirmation from Contact that the forum's application for 2024/25 has been approved and processed for payment. If you do spend ahead of receiving this approval, it will be at your own risk.

You should check that the grant money has been received into the specified bank account before committing to purchase any goods or services. If your forum does commit to expenditure and the forum's application is not successful, the forum will not be able to make a claim against the DfE or Contact, and you will be liable for any costs incurred or possible return of funds.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION for forums with new, or different bank accounts:

Due diligence checks and account set up by Contact on new forum bank accounts may delay receipt of parent carer participation grant by up to two weeks - if your parent carer forum changed its bank account since submitting the 2023/24 grant application, is a new parent carer forum, or has changed grant host, your forum should have completed a proforma and returned it to Contact with the new account details. For further information or a progress report, please contact the grants team - pcfgrants@contact.org.uk.

Good record keeping

To be able to demonstrate how the grant has been spent during 2024/2025, we recommend that your forum keeps a record or diary of the forum's activity (or outputs) to refer to at the end of the year for grant monitoring purposes, either in a shared folder, or nominate one person in your forum who collates information. This can include things like events, meetings, consultations, workshops, training, attendance at regional network meetings, as well as details of strategic meetings or works groups attended.

To track the outcomes (the difference/impact the forum made through activities), the forum should collect the following kinds of information:

Quantitative information

The number of:

- parents attending (physical or virtual) events/conferences/training hosted by the forum or other organisations
- new members joining the forum
- visits to the forum's website/social media
- parent representatives
- strategic groups/boards with parent representatives
- consultations the forum has taken part in, and the topic
- parents responding to surveys
- newsletters/bulletins sent out - including the number distributed to



Qualitative information

- details about any meetings, events, consultations, workshops, or training that the forum has hosted, joint funded or attended and the difference that they made to the forum; to services; and to families (outcomes)
- feedback from parents about your activities
- feedback from Local Authority (LA) Officers, Integrated Care Systems (ICS), about parental involvement, and co-production – what difference they think it is making
- feedback from parent representatives on strategic groups about the impact they have had and where they have successfully influenced decision-making
- the impact of involvement on individual parents – such as reduced isolation, parents finding work, building skills/confidence – the difference their involvement makes for themselves (e.g., better able to understand services and decision making) and other families, changes to services
- key challenges, changes, and successes
- feedback from your wider membership about your forum’s work and impact
- issues raised by parents – feedback from surveys and activities
- reaching and engaging with diverse groups and underrepresented communities through outreach

Changes of signatory or key officers during the grant period

It is not unusual to have changes of key officers at your forums Annual General Meeting, when people step down from roles naturally, or at other times.

You should follow the handover advice in this guide and notify your Parent Carer Participation Adviser as soon as you become aware that a change of Officer is likely so that we can amend our records. If an outgoing Officer of the forum was also the signatory on the Conditions of Grant form, a new form will need to be completed by another forum Officer – the grants team can help with this.

All outgoing Officers and Committee Members remain responsible for ensuring that the change of signatories is completed with the bank in a timely manner, and for handing over:

- all forum equipment and resources
- governing documents, policies, procedures, and minutes of meetings
- usernames and passwords including those for laptops, social media, website etc.
- accounts, chequebooks, bank statements, invoices etc.
- all records and information relating to the DfE grant and any other funding including invoices and proofs for the grant spend
- any other forum information
- any office or storage keys to remaining forum Officers
- any data that you hold about members must remain securely with the forum and comply with General Data Processing Regulations



- Further information about GDPR and the lawful basis for processing can be found [on the Information Commissioner's Officer website.](#)

Outgoing Officers or Committee Members have a duty to return any information belonging to the forum (such as accounts, financial information, or proofs of expenditure, claims and invoices, database, governance documents, minutes of meetings, copies of grant forms etc.) that they hold either electronically or in hard copy.

Until a formal handover has taken place, the outgoing Officer will remain responsible for any forum equipment, information, data, resources, or grant money that they possess.

If there are any personal conflicts or other circumstances which are likely to make a successful handover difficult, the outgoing applicant/grant holder or Officer should get in touch with their Parent Carer Participation Adviser to discuss a way forward.

Transferring the grant

It is not uncommon for a forum to fold, for a forum become independent from a host and have their own bank account, or for a forum to need a host organisation during the grant period. Contact has a transfer process in place to safeguard those involved as well as protecting public money.

In all cases:

- Contact must be informed
- A new Conditions of Grant form must be completed and signed by the new grant holder
- The organisation handing over will need to provide a mid-year monitoring account and POEs for the grant spend
- Contact will carry out an approval process and confirm the amount of money to be transferred to both parties
- The grant holder must wait for a sign off letter from Contact before transferring funds
- Both parties must agree before the new grant holder receives the remaining grant monies and accepts responsibility for the grant and for submitting the year-end grant monitoring
- The new grant holder must receive the amount stipulated in the letter from Contact.

If this kind of change takes place at the end of the grant year, the grant monitoring process must be completed before an application from a new forum or host organisation is approved.

We strongly advise that any underspend from the previous year's grant should not be used by any forum until the following year's grant is formally approved as there is a risk that unapproved spend may result in (the outgoing forum) having to pay money back to the DfE. Where a new forum is set up, any underspend from the previous forum must be returned to the DfE.



Advice for Treasurers

We advise that your forum's Treasurer keeps all invoices, receipts, signed and authorised expense and remuneration claim forms, and other proofs of expenditure securely in one place and adds to these through the year. Keeping a colour coded, chronologically ordered, running total of proofs of expenditure throughout the year to reconcile against grant budget headings may also help to keep things organised e.g., Infrastructure – your forum's April phone bill might be referenced as INF1. You might find Contact's budget spreadsheet useful which can be found on the [grants & monitoring page](#) of the Contact website.

If the forum's Treasurer is unsure of the requirements of their role, it is important to seek guidance or support from your Parent Carer Participation Adviser. The forum can also use the DfE grant to fund training for any Committee Member to help them to understand their role and responsibilities.

Gathering proofs of expenditure during the year along with the evidence of work done (your outputs and outcomes), will make the monitoring process easier. It will also help to identify any areas of spend where projected, and actual spend differ.

The Treasurer needs to ensure that the forum operates and manages their finances, expenses, and remuneration in line with the forum's financial control policy, and any expenses or remuneration policies, and to keep records associated with the DfE grant for a period of 7 years after the grant award in line with DfE requirements. See Contact's [webinar for Treasurers](#) for more information on the role and what it entails.

It is important to note that although the Treasurer will take on the duties of managing the finances, the whole committee or steering group is equally responsible for the management of the forum's funds. Therefore, processes need to be understood, and any key documents need to be accessible so that the forum can meet their obligations if the Treasurer falls ill or leaves the forum suddenly.

The liability of the committee or steering group as individuals may differ depending on the structure that the forum adopts – for example, an unincorporated organisation is, in legal terms, a collection of individuals and any debts or obligations would be the responsibility of the trustees or management committee / steering group themselves. Your forum may wish to take advice on limiting liability and choosing a legal structure that suits the forum's model and ensure that the forum has appropriate insurance or indemnity cover. If you require further advice on this, your forum has a complimentary subscription to Community Matters whose Knowledgebank and email support covers governance issues (see page 23).

Contact will be holding 1:1 support sessions for new forums going through the grants process for the first time, or forums struggling to complete the grant forms. Contact a member of the grants team to find out more.



General points for grant accounting and usage

Accountancy or Auditing Services

If the forum does not have a Treasurer who is confident to take on the day to day running of the forum's accounts, it is an acceptable use of the grant to have your forum's accounts prepared or checked by a qualified accountant or auditor.

Forums can also use the grant to pay another organisation or individual to manage their accounts. They, or your Treasurer, may present regular reports to the committee so that the forum understands how much of the grant has been spent; has been committed to spend, or is uncommitted grant funding left to spend; and how much of the grant remains in the forum's bank account.

It is the forum's responsibility to ensure that their accountant understands the format for reporting on the grant, and that they are familiar with the Conditions of Grant.

Grant spend and current financial year

The grant is awarded for the purchase of goods, or funding of activities or services which occur in the financial year from 1st April to 31st March. This means that goods must be purchased, or the activities or services happen, no earlier than 1st April 2024, and no later than 31st March 2025. The grant cannot be spent to fund activities or services which will occur **after** 31st March 2025, unless this is on a recurring subscription or policy e.g., insurance. For example, Antivirus protection or MS Office falls across two financial years; or if the forum is invoiced late for an event that took place in correct financial year. This is illustrated by the examples below:

Example: you hold an event in early March 2025, but the venue does not invoice you until late April. This can be paid for by the 2024/25 grant, as it is the date when the service or activity happened which matters, not the date of invoicing. This is the principle of accrued payment. An accrued payment is where a payment is recognised in the accounts before the payment is made.

Example: your forum's MS Office annual subscription is due at the end of January. It is a once per year payment that recurs each year at the same time. This is an acceptable purchase using the current year's grant despite much of the period covered being in the following financial year.

Any DfE grant money which has not been spent by 31st March 2025 ('the underspend') must remain unspent by the forum from 1st April 2025, until the forum is advised that their grant application for 2025/26 has been approved. If the forum does not make a grant application for 2025/26, or their grant application is not approved, the forum will need to return the full underspend to Contact. **It is a risk for any forum to spend any of the previous year's underspend before they have an approved grant application for the following year.**

All underspend from the previous grant year will be deducted from the next year's grant application.



Best Value

It is a condition of the grant that parent carer forums obtain best value for money when they are buying goods and services. Your forum should obtain at least three quotations for high value goods or services. The stipulated threshold amount will be detailed in your forum's financial control policy; the forum should follow its policy to ensure best value. You need to consider value from a quality perspective, as well as cost effectiveness. If you have any concerns, contact your Parent Carer Participation Adviser.

There may be times when you look to buy goods or services from a committee member, a family member, or close friend – in this instance the person with the interest should not be part of any discussion or decision making around this (Conflict of Interest). Steering group members should consider their skills, knowledge, experience, and expertise in this area and make an objective decision which is in the best interests of the forum. The decision should be made for the right reasons, including suitability and best value, and not be based on whether the individual would be unhappy if their services were not used.

Fraud awareness

The DfE parent carer participation grant utilises public money, and there need to be safeguards in place to protect against misuse of the money, or fraud. Contact will conduct due diligence checks to minimise the risks and to protect against fraud or misuse of the grant. We also check for evidence of fraud as part of the grant monitoring process.

By accepting the parent carer participation grant, forums are legally obliged to spend the grant in accordance with the Conditions of Grant.

You understand that providing false or misleading information on your forum's grant application or subsequent communications related to the Funding could lead to the Funding being withheld, or subsequently recovered. Civil or criminal proceedings shall be considered in the event of non-compliance. Post award assurance work shall be completed by the Department for Education or its agents to discover and recover fraudulent funds.

I/we understand that I/we am/are liable to prosecution and the recovery of funds should fraud be proven.

If I/we have a duty to report any incidents of fraud or deception within our forum, or any concerns about possible fraud, to Action Fraud at <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> or call 0300 123 2040.

I/we understand that we also need to notify Contact. I confirm that the bank details provided are the bank details of the organisation named as the grant applicant. I also understand that Contact may be in touch to verify these details as part of our due diligence checks.

When we assess grant applications, we consider each forum's history, including their ability to meet deadlines, the quality of monitoring submitted, any past missing proofs of expenditure, or proofs which do not meet the requirements set out in our guidance, or that the forum were advised to improve. This helps us to assess the risk associated with the awarding of the grant. We also ask for details of any other funding that forums receive to support parent carer participation so that we are aware of the potential for increased risk.



If your forum has other sources of funding, we advise you to keep the accounting separate from your DfE parent carer participation grant. This will minimise the risk of double accounting or of any duplication between the grants. If you part fund activities from your parent carer participation grant along with money from another funder, you must indicate clearly what proportion of your invoice you are submitting in your grant monitoring. If you require advice on this, please contact a member of the grants team.

If for any reason your forum's grant monitoring from the previous year cannot be signed off, the forum will not be awarded a further grant. Forum officers may be asked to sign a monitoring declaration to confirm that the money has been spent in line with the Conditions of Grant and that forum officers have not committed any fraud or deception. If serious financial malpractice is identified at any stage, including fraud or money laundering, the DfE may take steps to recover the grant, or notify the Police or Action Fraud. If fraud is suspected, or proven, Contact may need to share information with any other organisations that fund the forum.

If you become aware of any misuse of the grant money or suspect fraud, you have a duty to report this to Action Fraud at <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> or call 0300 123 2040 and to Contact.

Contact has a webpage with useful tips and resources on fraud for forums that we strongly recommend that all steering group or committee members read: <https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/parent-carer-participation/fraud-advice-for-parent-carer-forums/>.



Grant variations: changes to approved activity

Even though your forum's grant application has been approved, it is worth remembering that your forum's priorities and focus may change during the year. Your grant activity may vary because you wish or need to change what you wanted to do. You no longer need to fill in a grant variation form, but any variations you make **must** meet the Conditions of Grant.

If you are in any doubt whether your proposed variation will meet the Conditions of Grant, contact your Parent Carer Participation Adviser. If your Adviser confirms in writing that the variation fits the grant conditions, you may amend your forum's spend and account for this amended spend in your grant monitoring in April 2025. **If you do not seek clarification that your varied activity falls within the conditions of grant, there is a risk that some of your grant monitoring return may not be approved, and money may need to be returned to Contact.** If in any doubt, speak to your Adviser **before** amending your plans.

If your forum has a Contact held grant and the forum makes significant changes to your forum's spend or activity that is not in your approved grant application, a member of the team may contact you to clarify these changes before expenditure is approved. This is part of our due diligence process. We may also contact forums whose expenditure in budget areas significantly differs from the approved application, e.g., if staffing costs are over what was projected, or a large item is purchased which was not on the approved application. If unexpected purchases are made, spend in other areas will need to be reduced. Contact is unable to cover any overspending as we only have access to the money in the approved application. We advise all forums with a Contact held grant to keep a close eye on their projected and actual spend, and to include the full Contact held fee in your accounting right through the award period. We will send out spreadsheets with spend to date from January to help with your end of year spend, so that there are no surprises.

If your forum has a grant host, the host organisation must agree any variations or changes to the approved grant spend with the forum's committee or steering group before going ahead.



What the grant can be used for:

The purpose of the grant is to support, develop, sustain, and enhance parent carer participation in local areas and to enable the strategic participation and representation of parent carers with local statutory and voluntary partners in service provision, development, and improvement. The grant is to represent parent carers with children and young people with a range of SEND 0-25.

If the forum's proposed activity was open ended, or if you decide that a grant variation is necessary during the year, please remember that by accepting the parent carer participation grant you agreed to spend the grant money on activities such as those listed below. Note, this is not an exhaustive list:

- activity which supports the development of collective parent carer participation in the local area
- activity which strengthens the forum's membership or increases its reach and inclusivity across all disabilities and SEN
- outreach activities to include parent carers from diverse or underrepresented communities
- engagement events, whether these are solely organised by the forum or in partnership with other organisations – make sure you explain the outcomes for parent carer participation
- day to day running costs of the forum including – a wage to support an administrator or development worker (up to 75% of the forum's **total** grant spend); office space; stationery; IT equipment and licences including Office and virtual meeting software; accounting or auditing; phone and broadband costs; insurance
- parent carer out of pocket expenses (travel, childcare, subsistence)
- parent carer remuneration for reps attending strategic meetings
- website development and website hosting – the updating of websites and social media may be considered as part of staffing costs
- information, marketing, promotion, branding, publicity, and resources
- one-off commissioned work on the forum's website, on a consultation or training
- events with a participation focus
- to part-fund Information Days or co-produced events with other organisations (such as SENDIASS, Carers' organisations or the Local Authority) if there is participation content and outreach
- attendance or stands at other events where you might attract new members to the forum
- forum capacity building and team building activities
- paying associates, consultants, or trainers, providing forum focus days to develop the forum's governance, to enable the forum to plan and develop more effectively, training to support the involvement of the wider parent carer group, or support the development of the decision-making group of parents.

If you are in any doubt as to what the grant can or cannot fund, or if you have an innovative or unusual idea that you think might benefit the forum and are not sure whether your intended activity fits the Conditions of Grant, please check with your Parent Carer Participation Adviser **before** going ahead.



What the grant cannot be used for:

The purpose of the grant is to strengthen parent carer participation. Therefore, the grant **cannot** be used:

- to fund activities which are the responsibility of the local authority or other body. During your forum work you may identify a need for a particular service, publication, activity, or facility. It is not within the scope of this grant to fund this – the forum should use the evidence they have collected through consultations to discuss with commissioners and service providers and work with them to make decisions about next steps
- to purchase alcohol, or to pay for parking fines or other fines
- to pay for parent carers' involvement in shaping individual care packages for their own children
- to develop forums which pursue the resolution of individual parent carer problems or concerns regarding their own child
- to fund a forum that only concentrates on a limited number of conditions/disabilities/SEN – the grant's purpose is to fund a pan-disability parent carer forum
- for the development of parent carer forums which are exclusive to one service for disabled children (for example a forum on education issues, or short breaks services)
- to fund support groups or advocacy
- to fund political, religious, campaigning, or lobbying activities
- to pay for training in relation to impairment specific issues, for example autism, cerebral palsy, Down's Syndrome unless you can demonstrate that this is an identified need or gap in your membership and that putting on a particular activity may help you widen participation. Please speak to your Parent Carer Participation Adviser to discuss this
- to fund training for staff in a host organisation unless this has been agreed with the Adviser prior to the training taking place
- to fund any other local groups, or be gifted to any other groups
- to fund any gifts to individuals, e.g., flowers or vouchers to a parent carer leaving the forum, over the value of £25
- to fund fun events that do not have the aim of increasing parent carers' knowledge of the forum, widening reach, or attracting new members – there should be elements of capturing views informally or educating about the forum and its role

If in any doubt as to whether your proposed activity will meet the Conditions of Grant, speak to your Adviser.



Different types of payments to individuals

The grant can be used to pay people who carry out work on behalf of the forum. Forums can recruit people as:

- A volunteer where only out of pocket expenses are re-paid
- An employee or worker paid by wage or salary through payroll
- A self-employed contractor/consultant where a fee is paid for agreed work
- A Director where their role is paid via payroll

Forums should make decisions about the employment status of each role such as employee, self-employed, worker, office holder etc on a case-by-case basis. It is sensible to seek advice as this is a complex area and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) can ensure that the forum pays for any back payments of tax, pension contributions and national insurance.

We recommend that you complete the [HMRC employment status tool](#) for all workers and remunerated representatives. Parent representatives receiving payments for representative work could still be considered employees. You should answer all questions honestly, take a copy of the answers and submission, along with the determined result and keep for your forum's records. You should also discuss and agree each decision and record in the minutes of steering group meetings.

Further information can be found in the online session remunerating and employing people for forums and [setting up and running payroll with Community Matters](#).

The forum should ensure that anyone who is likely to be in a paid role should not take part in discussions or decisions about the role, or rate of pay to manage any conflicts of interest.

Forums can also seek additional advice from Community Matters or take other specialist service.

Payments to parents and carers can also impact on benefits and you can find specific guidance about this here: <https://www.scie.org.uk/co-production/supporting/paying-people-who-receive-benefits>

Parents and carers can also phone the [Contact helpline](#) for specialist advice about their own situation.

Staffing Costs from the DfE Grant

Up to 75% of the grant can be used to fund the costs associated with staffing and for the purposes of the grant, staffing covers any payments for administration, organisation or running of the forum, including development of participation and outreach work – even if the person carrying this out is paid on a self-employed basis. If in doubt, please speak to your Parent Carer Participation Adviser or refer to the Contact parent carer participation online sessions on employing and remunerating people for forums, setting up payroll with Community Matters and/or contact HMRC, ACAS or DWP prior to making payments. We recommended you run all staffing arrangements through HMRCs employment status, as above. Forums are



responsible for taking their own advice around staffing and meeting any associated requirements such as minimum wage, HMRC rules and funder obligations.

Your forum also has a Community Matters subscription for governance matters and access to legal and HR helplines via the CiC Assistance programme.

Fees and costs for professional services

The grant can be used for fees and costs for professional services, where they are for services or activities which strengthen parent carer participation e.g., redesigning a website, running a consultation, or a training event. These costs are not included in the 75% limit for administrative and co-ordination costs.

The cost of professional services such as web development would not be included in the 75% staffing rule. You will need to be able to demonstrate best value, so please see additional best value guidance (within the conditions of grant) and ensure that you obtain at least three quotes before committing resources to a particular project over the value set in your financial control policy.

If a parent carer from your forum (either officer, steering group or committee member, or wider member) is going to be the provider of these services, please also ensure that you have followed the forum's Conflict of Interest policy, or where this does not exist, good practice in ensuring that the person concerned is not involved in any discussion or decision about that service. The decision needs to be minuted, and the forum should have systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the service.

Parent carer remuneration

The grant can be used to remunerate parent carers for activity that strengthens parent participation, e.g., if they are representing the forum on a strategic decision-making board/work stream. The forum should have a clear policy about paying expenses and remuneration which details the kind of activities that are remunerated, and those activities which are unpaid voluntary roles, such as being a steering group member. Talk to your Parent Carer Participation Adviser if you have any questions or concerns.

Any payments to individuals for administrative or coordination tasks should be included in the staffing budget. If an invoice or claim form includes payment for staffing and strategic work, it needs to clearly show the totals under each heading so that they can be separated out.

All remuneration claims from parent carers not employed by the forum should be via claim forms which include the information below:

- Date of invoice/claim
- Name, full postal address, telephone number including landline (if they have one), and email address of claimant
- Date of activity



- Details of activity, including purpose and venue e.g., transitions work stream meeting, Pool Lane Resource Centre, My Town, Post Code
- Signature of the person claiming to confirm that the activity was on behalf of the forum
- Signature of the forum officer approving the claim
- Amount claimed for each activity
- Total claimed for all activities

Parent carers **should not** be paid until they have submitted either an invoice or claim form as above, which has then been checked and authorised by an approving forum officer. Some forums also make it a condition of remunerating parents who sit on strategic boards that they submit a feedback sheet on the meeting before they will be paid – this is down to the individual forum to decide.

The forum officer approving the claim should **never** sign off their own claims, sign cheques, or make bank payments for their own claims, or any claims from their spouse, partner, or relative. Talk to your Parent Carer Participation Adviser for guidance on resolving any issues around this.

If remuneration claims do not meet the requirements (as set out above) when you submit your grant monitoring, they may not be accepted.

Further information about making payments to parent carer is available on the links below.

[Co-production and participation: paying people who receive benefits from the Social Care Institute of Excellence, 2021](#), updated Jan 2023.

Parent carers unsure if receiving remuneration will impact on their benefits or tax liabilities can phone the Contact Freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555 for personalised advice.

NOTE: We recommend that you complete the [HMRC employment status tool](#) for all workers and remunerated representatives. Parent representatives receiving payments for representative work could still be considered employees. Further information can be found in the online sessions [remunerating and employing people for forums](#), [small forums and contracts](#) and [setting up and running payroll with Community Matters](#).

Parent carer expenses

Expenses are out of pocket expenses incurred when someone is carrying out duties on behalf of the forum. This can include reasonable travel expenses such as mileage or bus fares, childcare, meals when away from home on forum business, or payments for telephone or printer cartridges, stationery etc. Payment of expenses must be in line with your forum's expenses policy and decisions and must also follow the guidance below.

All claims for expenses should be submitted on an expense claim form, which as a minimum, should contain the following information:



- date of the claim
- name, address, and phone numbers/emails of the claimant
- date of the activity
- details of the activity
- if travel expenses – where from and to including post codes – if it was a return journey etc.
- total number of miles and amount of mileage claimed for the journey
- signature of the claimant to confirm that the expenses were incurred on forum business
- signature of the forum Officer approving the claim
- attach receipts for everything other than mileage - such as bus, train, taxi fares etc.

If the claimant has lost a receipt, you should refer to your Financial Control Policy to decide whether you will allow the expense and should indicate your approval on the form. If we request your forum's proofs of expenditure for checks, Contact will not approve payments with lost receipts which total more than £10 - unless there are exceptional circumstances, or additional proof of expenditure is supplied.

No expenses should be paid out in advance, or without appropriate proofs of expenditure i.e., receipts for train tickets or parking tickets. Petrol receipts and parking fines are not acceptable; mileage should be claimed at the agreed rate, in accordance with your expenses policy and submitted on a claim form with post codes of the location travelled from and to.

Expenses submitted to Contact from receipt books, stubs, or handwritten on pieces of paper may be rejected in the grant monitoring process and classed as underspend to be deducted from the following year's grant.

Further guidance on the definition of parent carer expenses, and how to manage them, can be found in the POE guidance document which is included at the end of this document and on our [grants & monitoring](#) page.

In May 2018, General Data Protection Regulations came into effect which parent carer forums must adhere to when holding or processing individuals' data. Forums will need to cover GDPR on their expense and remuneration claim forms relating to the DfE grant – there is a lawful basis for collecting and holding this data and in sharing it with Contact as the DfE's contracted partner administering and paying the grant.

Processing is necessary to 'exercise a function of a ministerial department and for the exercise of a function of a public nature that is in the public interest'. Individuals need to consent to sharing their data with Contact and the DfE, and to understand that it is a requirement of receiving the grant. Such data may include their name, address, telephone number, emails address, national insurance number, payroll or employee number, or bank details.



Events

Engagement events to encourage new members

We want to encourage forums to make participation an enjoyable experience and recognise that forums need to put on a range of activities that will encourage the participation of new members and diverse and underrepresented groups. The outputs and outcomes for events should indicate how, and in what way, parent carer participation, co-production, or the forum will be strengthened or enhanced through running these activities. There will need to be solid outcomes relating to participation for each activity that your forum undertakes.

The grant **cannot** be used to fund fun days, social activity, sports, or leisure events where this is the sole focus. However, such events are acceptable in specific contexts, where the forum is being promoted e.g. a new forum hoping to promote the forum and recruit new members, outreach including reaching out to diverse and underrepresented communities, running a consultation at such an event, a recruitment drive for new forum members, building trust and confidence in the forum through getting to know parents and enabling parents to get to know the forum and its members; or where the forum has a stand or presence at an event at which parent carers will be present and they may attract new members to the forum.

Please ensure that you reflect the participation outcomes of these kinds of events in your grant monitoring form. If in any doubt, check with your Parent Carer Participation Adviser.

Costs relating to the National Event

We strongly recommended that you included costs for the joint annual Parent Carer Participation National Event within your grant application. Forums should allow for travel and accommodation for one or two forum members to attend the event. The event itself will be free. However, if your forum did not allow for this, it will be possible to vary the grant spend later in the year as this activity fits the conditions of grant. Bear in mind that there may be another activity you may not get to complete because of this. There may also be the opportunity to apply for a Priority Grant to cover the cost of the annual event if your forum did not include this in their main grant application.



Documenting your 2024/25 spend

Proofs of expenditure: examples of acceptable and unacceptable proofs of expenditure.

Acceptable proofs of expenditure
Invoices which have name, address, phone number of provider, date of invoice, date and details of work, service or product, total amount claimed, name and address of forum who the invoice should be made out to, or to grant holding organisation.
Expense claim forms which give all the information outlined in this guidance below and on our template, and that have been signed as approved by a different officer of the forum who is not a spouse, partner or relative.
Remuneration claim forms or invoices which give us the full information needed as outlined in this guidance and our POEs guidance which have been signed as approved by a different forum officer who is not a spouse, partner or relative.
Legitimate receipts or travel tickets from the correct financial year i.e., between 1 st April 2024 up to and including 31 st March 2025, that are legible.
Pay slips or payroll extracts – the monitoring form must outline how the work done strengthens participation with clear outputs and outcomes for their work.
Invoices as above made out to the grant applicant or holding organisation. If you have a Contact held grant – to the forum c/o Contact at Unit G.07, Wenlock Studios Workspace, 50 - 52 Wharf Road, London, N1 7EU.
Recharges and internal invoices from grant holding organisations need to show what the forum received for the money they were charged e.g., staffing support, payroll, infrastructure costs must be broken down or itemized with evidence of outputs and outcomes which strengthen the forum or participation demonstrated in the form narrative.
Bank statements accompanied with copies of cashed cheques (which you can obtain from your bank – please note you may have to give them notice to supply this). This will only be an acceptable proof in exceptional circumstances, and in agreement with the Grants team.
Any of the above invoices, receipts, claim forms etc. which show the percentage of expenditure claimed against the participation grant (as opposed to another funding stream). Where a proportion of expenditure on an item is from another funding stream, it is especially important that the parent carer participation element is demonstrated to have contributed to outputs and outcomes which strengthen participation.



Unacceptable proofs of expenditure
Invoices or expense claims with limited information e.g., no address for the supplier , or expense claims that have been signed off by the person claiming them.
Statements or delivery notes from a provider, or quotations for work not yet carried out .
Receipts or invoices from the wrong financial year (except by prior agreement if a service spans two financial years) i.e., before 1 st April 2024 or after 31 st March 2025.
Receipts with missing information, no date, or illegible information .
Petty cash vouchers or receipts for petrol i.e., without expense claim forms showing mileage.
Parking fines or any other fines . These are never acceptable.
Any expenditure on alcohol . Please note that if you have meal deals that include alcohol then you need to show the proportion of the costs that you are claiming without the alcohol, or we will have to reject these.
Pay slips or payroll extracts for salary costs of officers or practitioners from an organisation where there is no additional evidence that the work they did strengthened participation, or without clear outputs and outcomes for work – or did not include a breakdown of remuneration for strategic work paid via payroll.
Invoices or internal recharges from the grant holding organisation not backed up with other evidence of spend , or evidence of outputs and outcomes which strengthen participation.
Invoices/receipts which have been fully claimed against another source from a different funder.

If unacceptable proofs of expenditure are submitted with your grant monitoring, they will be deducted from the total grant spend, (unless other acceptable proofs can be supplied) leaving the forum with an underspend to account for in the following year. Please speak to the Grants team at the earliest opportunity to discuss any proofs of expenditure you think might be unacceptable, and any possible solutions.

When it gets to February/March, if you have any lost or missing invoices or proofs, it would be a good time to ask providers for duplicates. If you have commissioned a service and the provider has not yet provided you with an invoice, you will need to remind them, and if necessary, outline the terms of your grant.



Activities funded by other grants

Please **do not** include activities in the grant monitoring return which are **solely** funded by other grant giving bodies. **Do** include activities which are part funded, by the parent carer participation grant and through other funders or grants and highlight where this is the case on the forum's grant application and monitoring forms. If you do need to split an invoice between funders, it needs to be clearly marked and indicating the proportion of the invoice that each funder is paying for. This will enable us to ensure that there is no double accounting.

Assets

The DfE conditions of grant requires that forums keep an asset register for any items over the value of £500 purchased using the DfE grant. It is good practice for forums to develop a register of their fixed assets anyway. Assets are the items that the forum has purchased such as computer equipment, printers, office equipment etc. The register will enable you to keep track of the items that the forum owns and to know their value. The register should be in a table or spreadsheet format and should detail:

- The asset number
- A description of the item – e.g., Intel quad core, i7-860, 1tb SATA 4GB DDR.
- Brand – e.g., Hewlett Packard
- Model No.
- Serial No.
- Supplier
- Purchase date
- Purchase price
- Funding stream – e.g., DfE grant / LA grant
- Location – who has the equipment, or the place where its stored
- Depreciation – the decrease in value
- Current value – depreciation calculation*
- Date of disposal (if applicable)

*A useful website that will help you to calculate depreciation is [here](#)

It might be useful to carry out an annual inspection of the forum's assets so that you know that everything is in good working order and that the location of the item is still current. If the location of the item has changed, the register should be updated to reflect this. All assets are the property of the forum and should not be retained by individual parents who leave the forum.

You also need to consider the useful life of items. Each year items will depreciate to the point where they are worth very little. With computer equipment, the operational lifespan is usually about five years. After



this time, the equipment is either obsolete, or worth very little if sold. The forum is likely to purchase updated equipment. When you do, dispose of the old equipment carefully, ensuring that any confidential data is professionally wiped, or the hard drive destroyed.

Websites, Facebook pages, other social media pages, other intellectual or digital property such as training packages, passwords to equipment and social media are also assets of the forum and should be part of a well-managed handover when different officers are elected take up a post. If in any doubt, notify your Parent Carer Participation Adviser before the handover takes place so that they can advise you.

If the forum folds and a new forum is established, you will need to formally transfer the assets purchased with the DfE grant to the new forum (also refer to the section below on if a parent carer forum closes). This should be recorded by both parties at the point of handover. Use your asset register as the basis for this transfer. Work out which assets are going to be useful to the new forum and compile an inventory or list of the items. Items such as letterheads, flyers or business cards containing the old forum's logo and contact details would not be of any use to the new forum and can be disposed of sensibly.

If there is no new forum, assets must be returned to the DfE's contracted delivery partner, Contact. Failure to hand over equipment on a forum's asset register purchased with the parent carer participation grant may result in the DfE taking action including notifying the Police.

The conditions of grant clause regarding equipment purchased with the DfE grant supersedes anything in forums' constitutions regarding disposal of assets to other similar groups.

Your forum might also want to keep a record of any high value items are held in stock, for example stamps, vouchers etc. and to ensure that they are securely stored. Vouchers are treated in the same way as cash and so any unspent vouchers at the end of the financial year will be counted as underspend and deducted from the following year's grant.



Good governance

One of the key elements to the running of a successful forum is good governance that underpins all that the forum does. Good governance helps to protect the committee or steering group, your wider forum membership, and public money.

The following information will help your forum to think about what governance you have already and identify what you may still need to put in place, to ensure that there are adequate policies and procedures in place to support the effective running of the forum. Throughout 2024/25, Contact will continue to produce online learning sessions and other resources to support forums in their day to day running.

You may also want to consider using some of your grant to support the forum to develop its governance. This could be by commissioning a Contact Associate or working with a local voluntary sector development agency.

A basic level of governance might include:

- A governing document – constitution or terms of reference
- Financial Control Policy – we ask you to submit this with your grant application
- Expenses and Remuneration Policy
- Safeguarding Policies for adults (and children if you run family events) and procedures, including having a named person responsible for safeguarding issues in your forum – see Contact’s [online learning session on safeguarding for forums](#) to help with this. You can access relevant safeguarding policies/procedures through the Community Matters Knowledgebank.
- Code of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Data Protection and Confidentiality policies
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Asset Register and Handover Policy
- Social Media policy
- A service level agreement or memorandum of understanding between the forum and your grant holder if your forum’s grant is held by another organisation

Governing Documents

A governing document is a set of rules outlining how your forum will operate. It can be in the form of terms of reference, a constitution, memorandum and articles of association, charitable constitution, or other rules.

Forums who already have a governing document in place will need to make sure that everyone involved in the main decision-making group of the forum has a copy and understands it. It should also be available on your website (if you have one) for all your membership, and other partners, to be able to read to understand the remit and rules of the forum.



It is good practice to review your forum's governing documents, policies, and procedures annually to check if any changes are needed and to refresh your memories about how the forum should be operating and working together.

New forums without governing documents, or those who would like general advice on governance issues should speak to their [Parent Carer Participation Adviser](#) or Community Matters or access their Knowledgebank of resources on governance (see next page for details).

Further information on governance and the policies listed above, including samples and templates can be found on the page [setting up and running a forum](#) on Contact's website.

Community Matters Membership

As part of our support offer to parent carer forums in 2024/25 we will continue to offer all forums a complimentary membership to Community Matters, an information service to help with any governance issues, including GDPR.

Community Matters work to advise and support community organisations, charities, and public-sector bodies across the UK with a team of in-house community Advisers. They provide a range of services including advice and information, training and consultancy and quality standards. These services help organisations understand and tackle often complicated legal, technical, and regulatory challenges.

Forums' complimentary subscription includes access to Community Matters **Advice and Information service**. This service provides access to a comprehensive Knowledge bank of Information, with over 150 information sheets and template documents. As well as this, you are also able access Expert Email Advice.

Those forums that have already set up an account can access it by using the web address www.communitymatters.org.uk and clicking on the organisations section. Please contact your participation Adviser if you need to register with Community Matters.

Once the form is completed, your forum's complimentary account is activated within 48 hours, after which you can log in and access the resources as required.

In addition to the complimentary advice and information that is available to parent carer forums via Contact's core offer, Community Matters also offer a range of **additional, specialist paid for** services, including legal services, training and consultancy, and quality standards **which are not included** in your forum's complimentary subscription and **would incur additional costs** if forums wish to access them. Further information about these services can be found on the [Community Matters website](#).



If a parent carer forum closes down

There are times when the parent carer forum is unable to continue as the forum, and there are no other parent carers willing to take on forum roles. If this happens the outgoing forum must notify the Parent Carer Participation Adviser as soon as they can so that they can guide them on the next steps, e.g., around the grant obligations. Careful consideration will need to be given to any data that the forum holds on its membership to ensure that GDPR is complied with. Contact **Community Matters** for further guidance on this if you are in any doubt.

The Conditions of Grant stipulate that the functional assets paid for by the grant should be returned to the DfE's contracted provider – in this instance Contact, or the new parent carer forum in the area, if there is one.

If the forum dissolves, the grant applicant, and all outgoing officers, in addition to the grant holder (if different) will remain responsible for the grant in its entirety, and any forum property purchased with the grant until grant monitoring has been approved and a handover of all forum property on the Assets Register has been completed. If applicable, the outgoing forum may be asked by Contact to retain forum assets until there is a new forum to pass them on to.

The Contact Parent Carer Participation team will take steps to ensure that all the assets are handed over to a new parent led forum in the area, and if there is no forum in existence, will take steps to support the development of a new parent led forum.

Once there is a new DfE funded forum set up with adequate governance, all equipment should be passed on to the new forum to enable them to carry out their role effectively. The handover should be formally documented on a Handover form by the outgoing forum's Chair, and new forum Chair, and Contact notified that this has taken place. If this is not possible within a reasonable timeframe, arrangements will be made to collect all assets or agree an alternative solution.

In other cases, a decision may have been taken that the parent carer forum cannot receive the DfE grant, for whatever reason. In this instance, arrangements must be made to return all forum property to Contact within an agreed timeframe. If an outgoing forum fails to return property funded with the DfE grant in a timely manner, or disposes of the equipment, the DfE will be notified, and they may take further action or notify the Police. A forum needs to hand over any assets that the parent carer participation grant has funded before the forum can be released from its legal obligations to the DfE.

It is a condition of holding the grant that forums must co-operate with the Parent Carer Participation team and satisfy the Conditions of the Grant, conclude the grant monitoring process to ensure that the grant has been spent appropriately and in accordance with the conditions, before the forum can be released from its obligations to the DfE.