

Welcome to this Online Learning Event for

Parent Carer Forums

**Raising awareness of your Forum, driving engagement
and amplifying the voices of local parent carers through
effective communication**

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Parent carers | Marketing practitioners | Contact Associates

Why are we doing this?

Why awareness and engagement feels hard:

- PCFs have limited resources
- Difficult to balance 'critical friend' role with role of parent carer voice in their community
- Overwhelmed, time-poor parents
- Pressure to be visible and deliver meaningful work

What will we be covering?

- General principles of marketing
- Different channels of communication
- Targeting different audiences – what works for different types of people?
- Communications planning
- The use of AI – pros and cons
- Practical examples of communications
- Top tips from other forums

General principles...

Effective marketing & engagement is about:

Audience – Who are we trying to reach, and what matters to them?

Message – What's the one clear thing we want them to know or do?

Timing – Is this the right moment in people's lives to hear this?

Channel – Where are different audiences most likely to see or hear it?

Tone – Does it feel respectful, relatable, and human?

Poll

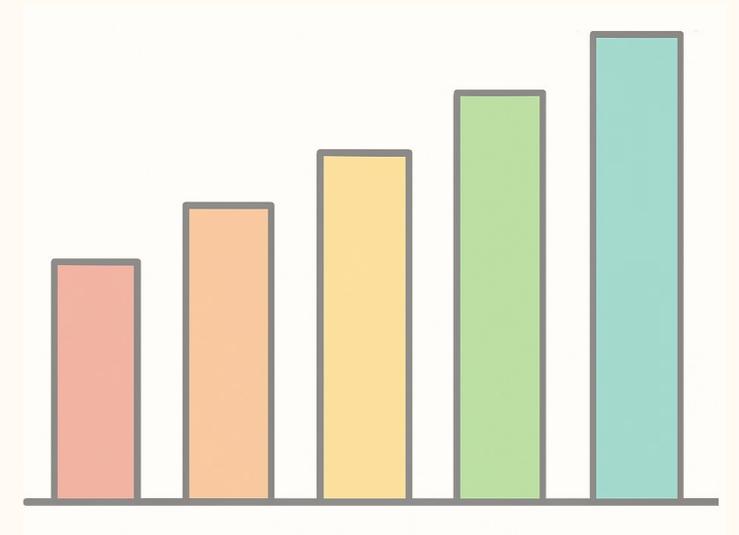
With these principles in mind, tell us:

How confident do you currently feel about the effectiveness of marketing and engagement for your Forum

Zoom Poll – with scale 1 to 5

1 is 'Not confident at all'

5 is 'Extremely confident'



Group Exercise

Tell us the different ways in which you talk to people about your forum

Channels: fit matters more than perfection

Common channels include:

- Public Facebook pages
- Website
- Closed Facebook groups
- Email newsletters
- Online and in-person events

Each channel has:

- Different audiences
- Different strengths and risks
- Different moderation and energy demands

Comms restraint is a strategy

Activity metrics are not impact metrics.

Restraint enables:

- Strategic focus
- Consistent decision-making
- Sustainable delivery

Quality over quantity:

- Fewer, purposeful communications
- Clear thresholds for action
- Messages that land — and get remembered

Engagement starts with clarity

**A strong forum doesn't just know its role
— it communicates it clearly.**

Parent Carer Forums exist to:

- represent the **collective voice** of parent carers
- work in **partnership** with education, health and social care
- influence services through **participation and co-production**

Why role clarity drives engagement

When the role is unclear:

- Forums absorb frustration and anger
- Engagement can become adversarial

When the role is clear:

- Parents understand why their input matters
- Professionals take forums seriously
- Engagement becomes purposeful

Engagement with purpose

Engagement is not:

- Constant posting
- Always-open discussion
- Asking parents everything, all the time

Engagement is:

- Asking the right people
- At the right time
- For a real reason

“We don’t ask parents for views unless there’s a real decision coming. Otherwise it’s just emotional labour.” — PCF lead

Interpreting engagement (beyond the numbers)

Engagement shows up in different ways:

- Public reactions (likes, comments, shares)
- Private responses (messages, emails, conversations)
- Structured input (surveys, forms, feedback requests)
- Offline signals (event attendance, referrals, trust)

People will show up if they feel their involvement helps drive tangible, positive change to show them the value of their engagement.

Why parents don't always engage

Common reasons include:

- They haven't come across the Forum at all
- They don't recognise themselves in the language used
- They're unclear what the Forum actually does
- They're not sure whether it's relevant to their situation
- They don't see a clear pathway from voice to impact

Surveys – evidence and impact

Surveys can be a useful tool:

- capturing the voices of parents within your area
 - understanding your effectiveness in how you represent parents
 - providing high quality insight to statutory partners
 - demonstrating the impact of your work
- 

Group Exercise

Why might you need a communications plan?

Why might you need a communications plan?

- capacity planning
- agreed roles
- right message, right audience, right time
- seasonality (eg. avoid demands on time in school holidays)
- agreed criteria for communications
- timely engagement when reps are going to be needed
- alignment with statutory partners' plans

Working smarter, not harder: where AI fits

Some forums are starting to use AI tools to:

- Save time on drafting and structuring content
- Reduce the pressure of “starting from scratch”
- Support consistency across communications
- AI tools may include:
 - Text tools (e.g. ChatGPT and similar writing assistants)
 - Image tools built into platforms like Canva or Adobe
 - Captioning, transcription and accessibility tools

You don't need to use AI — this is about options, not expectations.

AI – a support tool for PCFs

AI can help with:

- De-jargonising information into plain English
- Translating material into alternative languages
- Turning notes or rough thoughts into structured drafts
- Summarising meetings and creating transcripts
- Generating simple stats or headline insights from survey data
- Anonymising feedback so themes can be shared safely
- Supporting access needs (fatigue, dyslexia, cognitive load)
- Sense-checking tone in emails, reports or proposals

We'll move on to AI-generated imagery later

AI – best practice for PCFs

- ✓ Use real photos from real events
- ✓ Gain clear consent
- ✓ Keep images informal and honest
- ✓ Use recognisable local settings
- ✓ Store simple consent records
- ✓ AI generated images can be useful for diagrams or background illustrations

- ✗ Avoid AI or stock images of “parent carers”
- ✗ Avoid overly polished visuals
- ✗ Avoid images that don’t match reality

Trust is everything, anything which undermines authenticity can reduce engagement

Practical examples – top tips from other forums

- Create a You Tube channel for training videos and meeting recordings
- Assign roles to reps based on their skills and what they can realistically do
- Manage expectations about the effort/time which would be required – parents may be pleasantly surprised
- Annual surveys can do much of the work needed for co-production and evaluation
- Engage school-specific reps

Practical examples – top tips from other forums

- Don't overwhelm parents who are already stressed with excessive communication
- Allow for a temporary pause as well as opt-outs for communication
- Don't reinvent the wheel – eg piggyback face to face sessions on existing groups (eg. Family hubs, local SEND support groups)
- If moderation isn't achievable then don't provide open social media spaces
- Provide clear rules of engagement to ensure consistency and avoid reputational risk
- Focus on positive developments as well as challenges

Poll – checking back, what's shifted?

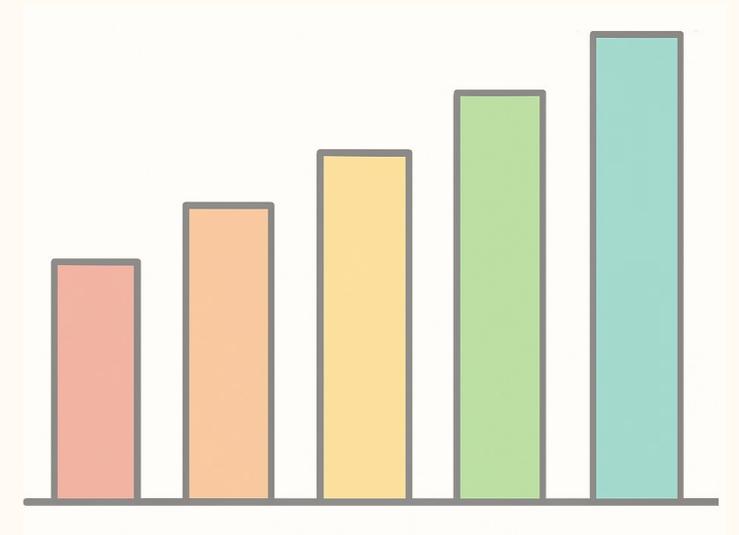
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Resources

[Using Canva](#)

[Creating surveys](#)

[Unlocking the power of data](#)

[Measuring impact](#)

[Contact PCF Handbook](#)

[Participation Advisers](#)

[Other learning and events for forums](#)

Question and Answer Session



What now?

Please take a few moments to complete the feedback survey link in the chat.

We will also send you a follow up email with advice and support and our contact details.

Thank you