

# Devolution Guidance and Information for PCFs

## Introduction

This document provides guidance and information for Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) on devolution, local government reorganisation (LGR), and related system changes that may affect local authority boundaries, regional decision-making, and SEND partnership working.

The purpose of this guidance is to help PCFs understand:

- what devolution means in practice
- how changes to local and regional structures may affect PCFs
- what this could mean for families and services
- how PCFs can continue to support effective parent carer participation and co-production during periods of change

The document is organised into four sections:

- 1. Understanding the Changes**  
Explains devolution, local government reorganisation, regional structures, and how decision-making may change.
- 2. Implications for PCFs as Organisations**  
Covers governance, funding, staffing, membership, footprint changes, collaboration, and organisational considerations for PCFs.
- 3. Supporting and Communicating with Families**  
Focuses on maintaining communication, engagement, co-production, and support for families during transition.
- 4. FAQs**  
Answers common questions about boundaries, representation, collaboration, membership, and leadership arrangements.

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## 1. Understanding the Changes

### What is Devolution?

Devolution means that some powers and funding move from central government to regional bodies made up of groups of local councils. These bodies make strategic decisions across a wider area, often led by a mayor.

### Further Information

- [Local Government Association Devolution Hub](#)
- [Institute for Government explainer on English devolution](#)

### What Structures Might Be Created?

Most devolution arrangements involve:

#### Combined Authorities or Combined County Authorities

- Groups of councils working together across a region.

#### Mayoral Strategic Authorities

- Some areas will have a directly elected mayor responsible for regional strategy.

**Local councils will still exist and continue delivering services, including SEND services.**

### What Decisions Are Made at Regional Level?

Regional authorities usually focus on strategic priorities, including:

- transport and infrastructure
- economic development and regeneration
- housing and planning
- skills and employment
- environmental policy

Some regions may also take on wider public service responsibilities over time.

## **Impact of Devolution and Regional Decision-Making**

### **How will local voices continue to influence decisions?**

Local DfE-funded Parent Carer Forums remain the recognised route for parent carer strategic engagement. Even if some decisions move to regional structures, PCFs should continue to gather local experiences and ensure these are fed into local SEND governance, Integrated Care Board (ICB) structures, and regional structures such as the NNPCF regional network.

### **How will SEND remain a priority?**

SEND duties remain statutory for local authorities and health partners. PCFs should continue engaging through local SEND boards, partnership meetings, and co-production arrangements to ensure SEND remains a priority within wider regional agendas.

### **Will PCFs be represented at regional level?**

Regional structures are expected to continue evolving. PCF representation is likely to continue through:

- local engagement routes
- regional collaboration between forums
- regional and national representation through the NNPCF

## **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

### **What happens if council boundaries change?**

PCFs are aligned to local authority boundaries. If boundaries change, PCF footprints will also change to reflect the new local authority area.

### **If a council splits into more than one area, will the forum split?**

Yes. We are assuming that each local authority area will continue to require its own PCF (as is the case at the moment). Support may be required to establish new forums.

### **Can one PCF represent multiple authorities?**

No. The current DfE participation funding model supports one PCF per local authority.

## **Local Area Partnerships and SEND Governance**

### **What happens if ICB footprints grow?**

Larger footprints may result in more regional health decision-making, but local engagement through PCFs remains important for understanding family experiences. Local place planning must still take place.

There is an expectation that ICBs will work with all PCFs within their footprint.

### **Will SEND governance change?**

SEND boards and partnership structures may evolve to reflect larger health footprints, but local SEND responsibilities will remain in place.

## **Multiple System Changes Happening Simultaneously**

Government departments are working across policy areas, but multiple reforms are expected to happen at the same time.

Local areas have been advised that devolution should not delay SEND reforms. PCFs should continue focusing on:

- maintaining stability for families
  - ensuring parent carer voices remain heard throughout change
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## **2. Implications for PCFs as Organisations**

### **Why This Matters for PCFs**

Devolution may change where some decisions are made and who influences them.

Key implications include:

- some strategic decisions affecting families may move to regional bodies
- local authorities and ICBs will still run SEND services, but wider priorities may be regionally influenced
- PCFs may need to engage both locally and regionally
- collaboration between PCFs across a region may become increasingly important

**Devolution changes who makes some decisions — not the importance of parent carer voice. PCFs will continue to play a vital role in ensuring families' experiences inform decisions at all levels.**

### **Governance and Organisational Changes**

#### **Guidance and Support**

Contact will support PCFs in considering:

- governance
- assets
- staffing
- membership
- organisational structures

Legal advice is being sought and further guidance will be shared as it becomes available.

### **Funding and Sustainability**

**How will funding be allocated if boundaries change?**

Participation funding is allocated per local authority area. Changes to boundaries may therefore lead to funding adjustments or new allocations in future participation contracts.

For the 2026/27 financial year, the participation contract remains linked to current local areas and does not currently allow additional funding for newly created areas.

Contact is in discussion with the DfE regarding future financial implications.

### **Will there be transition funding?**

This has not yet been confirmed. PCFs should raise any need for transitional support where structural changes create additional workload or organisational change.

PCFs may apply for priority grant funding where necessary.

### **Expectations of PCFs**

Regardless of how local areas change, PCFs are expected to:

- collaborate constructively
- work in a solution-focused way
- remain mindful of the impact on all affected forums and families
- Ensure the PCF continues to represent local parent carers

To maintain DfE recognition and grant funding, PCFs must align with the revised local authority footprint.

### **Employees and Non-Employees**

#### **Employees**

Contact is consulting on the implications for paid employees and seeking legal advice and DfE guidance.

#### **Non-employees**

Non-employed representatives, including:

- steering group members
- trustees
- directors
- committee members
- volunteers
- parent carer representatives

must live within the new local authority footprint.

It is hoped individuals will consider joining the PCF covering their new local area, subject to that PCF's approval process

### **Membership and GDPR Considerations**

PCF membership needs to align to the local authority area. PCFs should support collaborative membership development across neighbouring forums and members should be signposted to join the PCF that represents their new local authority area where relevant.

Where boundaries change, PCFs are expected to:

- inform members about changes
- share links to relevant new PCFs
- remain GDPR compliant
- provide unsubscribe options

Where appropriate and in accordance with your GDPR policy, membership information may be used to:

- identify members affected by boundary changes
- personalise communications based on what the new local authority boundaries mean for them, and offer options in terms of next steps, including joining the PCF in their area
- support transitions to new forums

*There is no expectation to remove members outside of the PCF's data retention policy*

If authority areas expand, PCFs may need to:

- recruit from newly included communities
- strengthen outreach activity
- update databases and privacy notices
- build relationships with neighbouring forums

**No personal information should be shared without consent or another lawful basis.**

### **Key Organisational Considerations**

PCFs may need to consider:

- governance arrangements
- allocation of assets and finances
- staffing and volunteer roles
- employment law implications
- leadership and representation
- membership arrangements
- communication consistency across forums

### **Collaborative Working**

PCFs are expected to:

- work collaboratively with neighbouring forums
- share information
- discuss future scenarios
- support the establishment of new PCFs where required

Forums may also wish to seek early clarity from local partners regarding:

- expected boundary changes
- timelines

- future participation arrangements
- funding implications

### **Recognising the Strength of the PCF Network**

PCFs have successfully navigated major system changes before.

Maintaining strong local engagement, collaborative working and clear communication will help ensure parent carer voices continue shaping services.

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### **3. Supporting and Communicating with Families**

#### **Focus on Stability for Families**

PCFs should prioritise:

- maintaining strong communication with families
- working with local areas to provide accurate and timely information
- ensuring parent carer voices continue informing decision-making

#### **Impact on Families and Services**

##### **Will services continue during change?**

Statutory duties remain in place, so services and support for children and young people should continue regardless of structural change.

Services may evolve alongside local changes and SEND reforms.

##### **Will EHCP processes continue?**

Legal responsibilities for EHCP assessments, reviews, and provision currently remain unchanged.

(This may change in future under SEND reforms once legislation changes.)

##### **What about cross-border placements?**

Existing arrangements for children attending schools outside their local authority area should continue through current inter-authority processes.

##### **What about school transport?**

Transport policies remain the responsibility of local authorities, although policies and guidance may evolve over time.

##### **How will families be informed?**

Local authorities and partners should communicate with families about changes, and PCFs may play an important role in:

- sharing information
- gathering feedback
- supporting understanding

## **Rural, Coastal and Smaller Communities**

### **How will rural and coastal voices be heard?**

PCFs should continue highlighting the specific needs of rural and coastal communities within local, regional, and national discussions.

### **How will rural challenges be considered?**

Evidence from parent carers remains important in demonstrating issues such as:

- transport
- access to services
- workforce availability

## **Maintaining Co-production and Relationships**

### **How can parent carer strategic engagement be maintained?**

PCFs should continue engaging with:

- local health partners
- SEND governance groups
- local area partnerships

Forums are expected to collaborate with neighbouring PCFs where systems operate across larger areas.

### **How can local co-production continue?**

Strong local engagement with families will help ensure co-production remains rooted in lived experience, even where decision-making occurs across larger regional structures.

### **How can relationships with stakeholders be maintained?**

PCFs should continue prioritising strong relationships and working in a solution-focused way with local area partnerships, even where structures change.

### **National Support During Transition**

Contact and the NNPCF are working with the DfE to ensure support is available for PCFs during transition periods.

Further guidance and support arrangements will be shared as they become available.

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## **4. FAQs**

### **What happens if your home and your child's school are in different PCF areas?**

PCF membership allows for cross-border representation because many families use services outside their local authority area, including schools and health provision.

Families may therefore join more than one forum.

Forums are expected to continue working collaboratively following devolution.

### **Will there be different policies and procedures in different areas?**

Yes. Each PCF and local authority will continue to maintain its own policies and procedures.

### **How will PCFs operate following devolution?**

PCFs will continue operating in the same way they historically have, guided by:

- DfE grant conditions
- the PCF handbook

### **Will there still be collaboration between forums?**

Yes. Forums are expected to continue collaborating through:

- regional meetings
- joint working
- shared projects

### **Can you still lead your forum if you no longer live in the new footprint?**

This will depend on whether the individual is:

- an employee (where legal advice and employment law must be followed)
- a volunteer or non-employed representative

Where employees are affected, forums must follow legal advice.

For non-employees, roles will change alongside local boundary changes. Individuals are encouraged to become involved in the forum covering their new local area.

**What is expected of volunteers, steering group members, representatives, trustees, and others who no longer live within the local authority footprint?**

The expectation is that non-employed roles will transition to the relevant local area where appropriate.

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