

# Oxfordshire Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF): Insights from Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum January 2025

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## Introduction

The Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum (OxPCF) was invited by Oxfordshire County Council to contribute to the Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) by highlighting our key achievements, areas for development, and ongoing work to support parent carers of children and young people with SEND.

This report reflects OxPCF's commitment to representing the voices of parent carers, showcasing the progress we have made in 2024 and outlining some of the priorities we aim to address in 2025. It provides an overview of our initiatives, events, and collaborations, as well as areas where further improvements are needed to strengthen the support available for families.

Over the coming months, OxPCF plan to review our priorities and identify where further improvements can be made. As a forum, we are continually reflecting on our working methods and processes to ensure we are adapting and improving to better serve the needs of parent carers and their families. This ongoing evaluation helps us remain responsive and effective in our advocacy and collaboration with key stakeholders across Oxfordshire.

Together with Oxfordshire County Council, NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH), OxPCF continues to play a pivotal role as part of the Local Area Partnership, striving to drive meaningful change for the SEND community.

This report aims to inform the Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) process, ensuring that the lived experiences and needs of families are fully represented in the broader evaluation and planning of SEND services across Oxfordshire.

## **Successes: Highlight Key Achievements**

Over the past year, the Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum (PCF) has achieved significant milestones, reflecting a period of substantial growth and impactful engagement. Key achievements include:

**Team Expansion:** The PCF has grown, with additional paid staff and an increased number of parent representatives. This expansion has enhanced our capacity to connect with and advocate for families.

**Enhanced Outreach:** With more resources and a strong community presence, we have significantly improved our outreach efforts, connecting with a larger number of parent carers and building trust and familiarity within the community.

Since joining us in May, our Community Coordinator has played a vital role in this progress, visiting 27 community groups and connecting with over 133 parent carers. During these visits, they have shared information about OxPCF, gathered valuable feedback on SEND services in Oxfordshire, and provided guidance on accessing support through services like SENDIASS. This work has strengthened our connection with the community and amplified the voices of parent carers across the region.

**Collaborative Initiatives:** In partnership with CAMHS, we have successfully delivered the first series of highly praised and well-attended webinars, with the second series currently underway and two more webinars remaining. These sessions have significantly improved access to essential information and support for families on key themes affecting neurodivergent families, with plans to continue offering this valuable resource in the future.

**Flagship Events:** Our major events, including the parent carer Local Area Partnership event **Better Together 2024** and the upcoming **SEND Together 2025**, have created valuable opportunities for connection, learning, and empowerment within the SEND community. Facilitated by OxPCF with funding and support from the Local Area Partnership, these events continue to bring parent carers and professionals together to collaborate and drive meaningful change.

**Listening Events:** We have facilitated several listening events for the Local Area Partnership, providing parent carers with meaningful opportunities to share their perspectives, with the goal of influencing service development and driving improvements.



**SEND Connect:** These events, hosted by OxPCF and funded by the Oxfordshire Community Grants, provide vital opportunities for parent carers to connect with their community both face-to-face and online. They ensure access to key information and updates, offer support, and feature guest speakers from SEND organisations and services.

Parent carers have shared positive feedback about their experiences at these events:

- “Thanks for making me feel so welcome, heard, and seen at my first in-person OxPCF event. I’ll be back next time”
- “Thank you. As always, a very helpful get-together.”
- “This is the first group I’ve attended where I’ve felt so supported and welcomed, and with no judgment.”
- “The sessions are so helpful and encouraging.”

In a recent survey, attendees shared that they rated the events as very good, accessible, and felt the topics were relevant to their needs. Looking ahead, they suggested future topics, including:

- Quality of EHCPs
- Sleep challenges
- Getting support with school

This feedback highlights the value of these events in addressing parent carers’ priorities and providing a supportive platform to connect, learn, and engage with vital SEND services.

**SEND Newsletter:** The launch of the SEND Connect newsletter has been a key milestone in keeping families informed. Two editions have been released so far, providing updates and insights on important SEND topics. The next edition is scheduled for publication during February half term.

👉 **Access our newsletter here:** <https://www.oxpcf.org.uk/blog/categories/newsletters>



**SEND Network:** The SEND Network has strengthened communication and collaboration between stakeholders, including charities, organisations, and SEND professionals. Meetings have provided a platform to share ideas and drive improvements, with the next session planned for 28th February and the first in-person event scheduled for Spring 2025.

These initiatives have been supported by Ana, our Communications and Engagement Lead, who joined OxPCF in June 2024. Since then, she has:

- **Improved Social Media Engagement:** Increased visibility and interaction across public platforms like Facebook and Instagram, with plans to further develop a comprehensive strategy.
- **Organised Outreach Sessions:** Delivered SEND Connect Online Parent Carer Sessions in October and in-person events across Abingdon, Didcot, Witney, and Bicester during November and December 2024. So far in 2025, sessions have been held in Abingdon, Didcot, Banbury, Witney, Wantage, and Bicester, covering topics such as Sensory Diets, Alternative Provision, SENDIASS, Autism, Mental Health Support, and Young Carers, with guest speakers leading each session.
- **Launched the SEND Network:** Facilitated the first meeting in October 2024, followed by a second in December, bringing together SEND organisations and professionals to collaborate and share expertise.

Ana's work has enhanced OxPCF's outreach, ensuring parent carers feel connected, supported, and informed. These efforts continue to build trust and improve collaboration within the SEND community in Oxfordshire.

**Listening to Families: Insights from Surveys and Polls:** We offer regular opportunities for families to share feedback on specific themes via polls and wider surveys through our peer support group and mailing list. These platforms allow families to highlight key issues, share insights to identify recurring themes, and help us prepare for inspections and stocktakes with Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE).

By gathering and presenting parental feedback through these polls and surveys, we are pleased to have the opportunity to highlight the strong engagement from families and the importance of these issues to our community. We are also very grateful to families for taking the time to share their experiences.



One key example is the polls we carried out for the Ofsted inspection in July 2023. We ran the same poll again for the Oxfordshire engagement visit, allowing us to share any changes and updated insights with Ofsted. This provided a clear picture of the evolving needs and experiences of families in Oxfordshire.

Another example is the schools survey, which closed in February 2024 and received a significant number of responses. These contributions, alongside insights from other polls, are helping us raise key concerns and priorities, providing valuable information to support improvements for SEND families.

While there has been a delay in producing the final schools survey report due to unexpected capacity issues, we are now prioritising its completion to ensure these critical voices are heard and acted upon. In the meantime, we have already shared valuable feedback with Oxfordshire County Council and Nathan Thomas, CEO of the ACER Trust. Nathan co-chairs the Right Support, Right Time in Inclusive Settings Programme Theme Group as part of the SEND Transformation Programme and is a member of both the Partnership Delivery Group (PDG) and the SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB).

We remain committed to ensuring the insights shared by parent carers are used to inform and improve SEND services across Oxfordshire.

**Co-production Training:** We encouraged and contributed to organising co-production training for the Local Area Partnership, promoting a collaborative approach to service delivery and planning. While this is an important step forward, we recognise that there is still a long way to go to fully embed co-production across services. Building a culture of understanding and commitment to true co-production remains a priority, ensuring parent carers are meaningfully involved in shaping SEND services at every level.

These achievements underscore our ongoing commitment to empowering parent carers, building meaningful collaboration, and driving positive change for families across Oxfordshire.

## **Strengths: What the PCF Excels at**

As a Parent Carer Forum, we are proud of the strengths that drive meaningful change. These reflect our dedication, expertise, and collaboration with the wider community, enabling us to advocate effectively and respond to the evolving needs of SEND families.

**Tenacity:** Demonstrating perseverance and determination in advocating for meaningful change.

**Commitment to Improvement:** A relentless focus on making things better for families and the community.

**Diverse Knowledge and Skills:** Drawing from a broad range of expertise and experiences within the group.

**Inclusive Perspectives:** Ensuring a wide variety of viewpoints are represented and considered.

**Strong Connections:** Building and maintaining relationships across families, professionals, and the wider community.

**Responsiveness:** Acting quickly and effectively to present and address issues affecting families.

**Diversity:** Representing a group with varied backgrounds and experiences, enriching our work.

**Reflectiveness:** Continuously evaluating our actions and approaches to ensure ongoing improvement.

**High-Quality Reporting:** Producing well-researched, clear, and impactful reports.

**Engaging Social Media Presence:** Effectively using platforms to inform, connect, and amplify the voice of families.

**Facilitating Access for the Digitally Excluded:** Progress has been made, but more is needed to support families with limited online access. Through the community coordinator's outreach and our WhatsApp group, we help families connect, share feedback, and stay informed. We remain committed to finding additional ways to include and support all families

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** Clear and robust agreements that guide effective collaboration. The MOU is scheduled for review and update with the Local Area Partnership by June 2025.

## Areas for Improvement: Opportunities for Growth

As a Parent Carer Forum, we recognise the importance of reflecting on areas where we can grow and improve. These opportunities will help us strengthen our impact, enhance collaboration, and ensure we continue to meet the needs of the families we represent.

**Maintaining Professional Relationships:** Ensuring our interactions are consistently respectful, collaborative, and professional, while having the confidence to address and challenge situations where these standards are not reciprocated.

**Awareness of Capacity:** Being more conscious of our limitations to avoid overcommitting and to work within realistic expectations.

**Managing Ambition:** Balancing our passion for change with a realistic understanding of what is achievable.

**Expanding Representation:** Growing our network to include a broader range of voices, especially those from smaller, unsupported groups or those with limited digital access.

**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):** Embedding EDI principles more deeply into all aspects of our work.

**Clear Communication:** Ensuring all communications are free of jargon and easily understood by all.

**Improving Feedback Loops:** Strengthening the process of sharing outcomes and updates with families after engagement.

**Boundary Management:** Being mindful of time, capacity, and the expectations placed on the PCF as partners within the Local Area Partnership (LAP).

**Adhering to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** Ensuring the principles outlined in the MOU are consistently upheld within the LAP.

**Strengthening Stakeholder Relationships:** Building and maintaining robust working relationships with all partners in the LAP.

**Cultural Change:** Continuing to strive for a culture of openness, collaboration, and respect across all stakeholders.

By addressing these areas, we aim to enhance our effectiveness, uphold our values, and foster a stronger, more inclusive environment for the families we serve.

## **Offer and Activities: What We Provide**

The Parent Carer Forum offers a wide range of activities and services to support families, gather insights, and drive meaningful change. These include both independent initiatives and contributions to the Local Area Partnership (LAP):

**Opportunities for Feedback:** Providing parent carers with platforms to share their experiences and feedback on services.

**Engagement Activities:** Organising focus groups and listening events to gather diverse perspectives and encourage open dialogue.

**Newsletter:** Regularly sharing updates, stories, and key information through our SEND Connect newsletter.

**Community Outreach:** Actively connecting with families to establish trust, build relationships, and raise awareness.

**Participation in the LAP:** Collaborating with the Local Area Partnership to drive service improvements collectively.

**SEND Network:** Offering a space for professionals and SEND organisations to connect, collaborate, and share resources.

**SEND Room Peer Support:** Providing a supportive space for parent carers to connect, offer peer support and share experiences.

**Webinars:** Hosting informative sessions on key topics, often in partnership with other organisations.

**Timely Information Distribution:** Ensuring families have access to relevant news and updates as they emerge.

**Data Collection Mechanisms:** Quickly gathering insights and evidence to inform discussions and decisions.

**Meeting Representation:** Attending numerous meetings and boards on behalf of the forum and as parent carers to represent family perspectives on SEND in Oxfordshire.

**Document Review:** Analysing papers, documents, and communications to provide informed feedback.

**Reports and Surveys:** Producing detailed reports and conducting surveys to highlight key issues and insights.





**Event Facilitation:** Hosting, administering, and facilitating events that engage and empower the community.

**Recognised Advocacy Channel:** Acting as a trusted channel for families to raise concerns and have their voices heard.

**Information and Resources:** Providing accessible, relevant resources to support parent carers and families.

These activities reflect our commitment to empowering families, enhancing collaboration, and fostering meaningful improvements in SEND services and support.