



Representing Parent Voice Survey

November 2025

Report finalised January 2026



PCFD

Parent Carer Forum Devon

Contents

Page

1	Title
2	Contents
3	Summary • Awareness of PCFD • How parents view PCFD • How families want to share their views • How families want PCFD to share information • Comments from respondents
4	Summary continued • What we've learned • How we're responding to what families told us • What we've already done • What we plan to do next
5	Summary continued • Thank you
6	Full Report – introduction
7	Question 1: How much do you know about PCFD? Question 2: What words would you use to describe PCFD?
8	Question 3: How can we hear from families more clearly and more often?
9	Question 4: How would you like us to share updates and news with you?
10	Question 5: Final Thoughts (optional) Themes Summary
11	1 Transparency & Governance
12	2 Visibility & Communications 3 Representation & Inclusivity
13	4 Trust & Relationships
14	5 Influence & Driving Change
15	6 Engagement Format & Access
16	7 Clarity about what PCFD does
17	8 Working in Partnership
18	9 Practical Help & Outcomes
19	Progress • What we've already done • What we plan to do next In one sentence
20	Thank you

PCFD Survey – Representing Parent Voice

Summary

In November 2025 we asked parent carers across Devon to share their thoughts about Parent Carer Forum Devon (PCFD). We wanted to understand how well people know us, how they feel about the Forum, and how we can improve the way we listen and stay in touch with families.

We received 35 responses in total, with 27 longer comments. We grouped these comments into themes to help us understand what matters most to families.

Awareness of PCFD

- Families have very different levels of awareness about PCFD
- Some parents hadn't heard of us at all
- Many said it would be helpful to have clearer information about our role and purpose

How parents view PCFD

- Parents used a mix of positive and negative descriptions
- Some families weren't sure what impact we make or how we work
- There was a clear desire for more clarity and consistency

How families want to share their views

- Families want more flexible and accessible ways to share their experiences
- Local, face-to-face local opportunities are important
- Many parents prefer simple, quick ways to give feedback
- Families who feel under-represented want to feel included and heard

How families want PCFD to share information

- Families want information to be clear, regular and easy to find
- Email and topic based updates are preferred
- Families want information shared across several platforms, not just Facebook

Comments from Respondents

- Some parents didn't know PCFD existed before the survey
- Many want PCFD to be more visible, more connected and more trusted
- Families want us to hear from a wider range of parent carers – especially those whose voices are often missing

What We've Learned

- Awareness of PCFD is still low, and our purpose isn't always clear
- Families want more regular, simple opportunities to share their views
- Visibility and trust need ongoing attention, particularly for rural and under-represented families
- Parents prefer targeted, regular communication, especially via social media and direct email

How we're Responding to What Families Told Us

PCFD is already making meaningful changes based on what parent carers shared with us. We're committed to being more open, more visible and more collaborative, so that families across Devon can see — and feel — the impact of their voices on the system.

What We've Already Done

- Created a clearer, easier-to-use website that explains who we are, what we do, what we don't do, and how families can get involved
- Started visiting SEND groups and grown our team of SEND Ambassador Volunteers
- Listened to worries about trust and confusion, and shared myth-busting information to clear things up
- Worked closely with schools, health teams and the council — for example by joining training sessions, giving talks, and helping new staff understand how to work well with families

What We Plan to Do Next

- Make it easier to understand how we work and how we make decisions, using simple explanations and new website pages
- Improve how we communicate by using more platforms and keeping our messages clear and consistent
- Build stronger relationships with SEND communities through more visits, more conversations and more accessible ways to get involved
- Share regular updates — weekly highlights and a monthly newsletter — so families can see what we're doing, not just on Facebook
- Show our impact more clearly by explaining how parent voices help shape local services
- Encourage services to share their own “what we heard and what we're doing” updates, so families can see changes without expecting PCFD to speak for them
- Use plain language and simple visuals to explain our role and what families can expect from us

Thank you

We are truly grateful to every parent carer who took the time to respond. Whether comments reflected frustration, encouragement or questions, each one helps us understand families' experiences and improve the way we connect, communicate and work alongside parent carers across Devon.



Full Report

In November 2025 Parent Carer Forum Devon (PCFD) surveyed parent carers to understand levels of awareness about the forum, hear what parent carers think about the Forum and explore how we can better hear from families and share information. We received 35 responses in total, with 27 longer comments that were coded into themes and sentiments.

Thank you to every parent carer who took the time to share your thoughts with us. We know that completing a survey takes time and emotional energy, especially when families are navigating complex, stressful or uncertain experiences within the SEND system. Your feedback is essential to help us understand what families need from their Parent Carer Forum, where communication hasn't been clear enough, and where expectations of a Parent Carer Forum may need better explanation.

Some of the themes raised reflect wider misunderstandings about the national role of Parent Carer Forums and how they work in partnership with local services. Other comments highlight areas where PCFD has already made meaningful improvements — including our new website, clearer information about our role, and growing engagement with support groups across Devon — but where those changes may not yet be visible to all families.

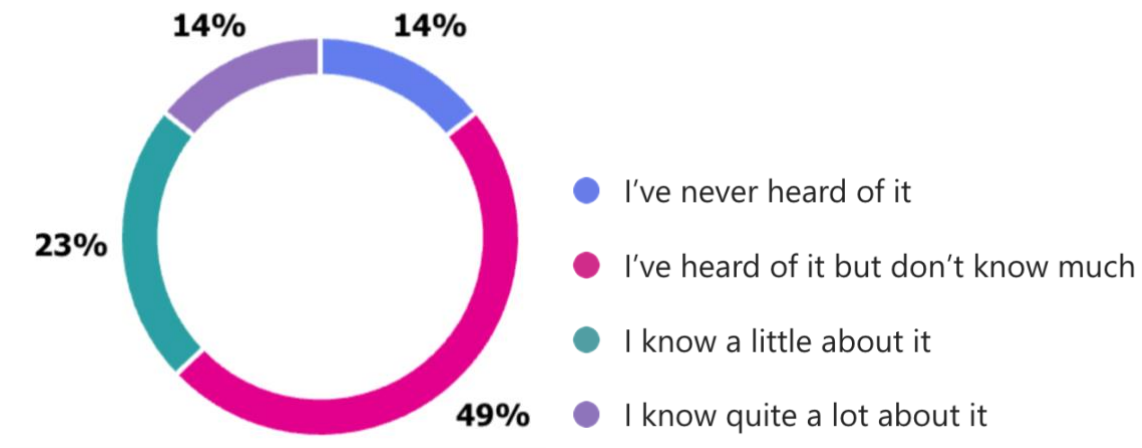
We want to respond with openness and clarity. Our aim is not to dismiss anyone's experience or perspective, but to explain what PCFD does, what we do not do, and why. We also want to show how we are strengthening our work, building new relationships, and developing more opportunities for families to shape services at different levels of involvement.

We will start with examining the answers to each question, then we will examine the longer comments we received.



Question 1:

How much do you know about Parent Carer Forum Devon (PCFD)



Awareness levels varied significantly:

- 5 respondents had never heard of PCFD
- 17 had heard of it but did not know much
- 8 knew a little
- 5 knew quite a lot
- No one reported being actively involved

Several comments described PCFD as unknown, quiet, secretive, or hard to reach. This shows a need for stronger visibility and clarity around our role.

Question 2:

What words would you use to describe PCFD?

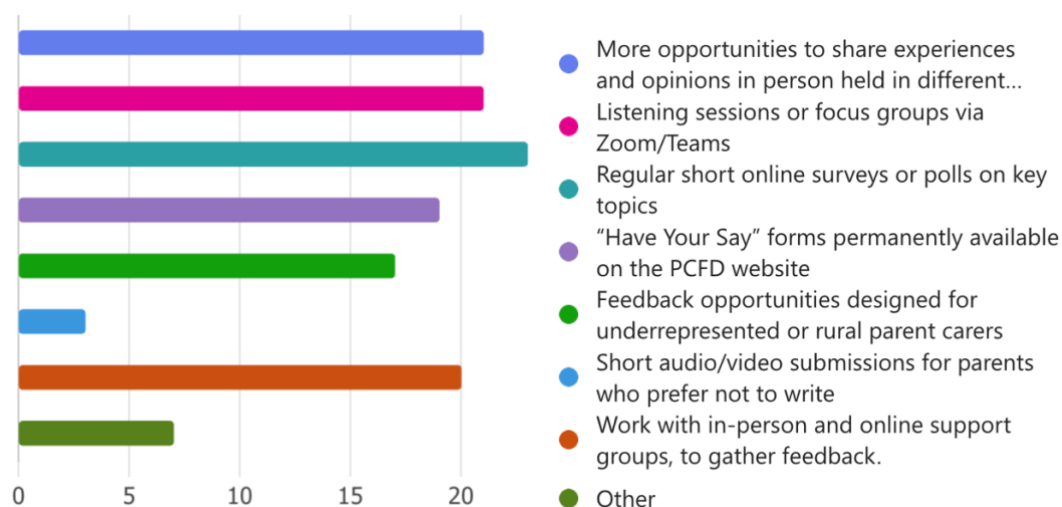
(e.g., understanding, helpful, friendly, informative, hard to reach, inconsistent, unresponsive, etc.)

Respondents used a mix of positive and negative descriptors, reflecting inconsistent experiences:

- Positive descriptors included: informative, good, working hard
- Negative descriptors included: secretive, defensive, uncommunicative, unknown, and not sure what you actually do to help
- It is clear that while some families recognise PCFD's efforts, many still struggle to understand its purpose and impact

Question 3:

How can we hear from families more clearly and more often?



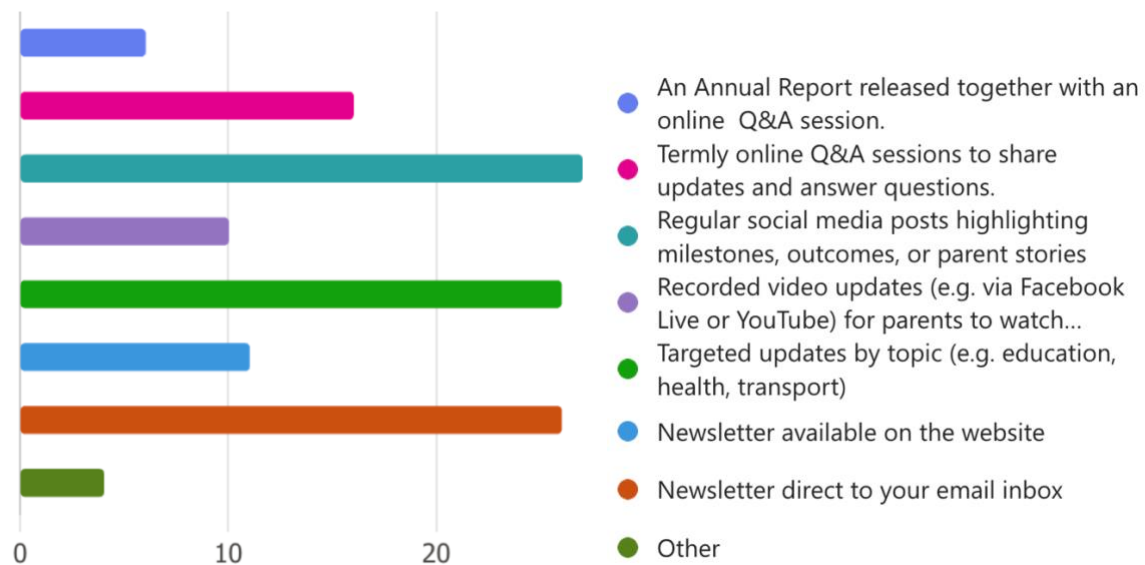
Respondents highlighted a strong desire for more accessible and varied ways to share their experiences:

- 23 want regular short online surveys or polls
- 21 want in-person opportunities across different parts of Devon
- 21 want online listening sessions via Zoom or Teams
- 20 want PCFD to work with existing in person and online support groups to gather feedback
- 19 want "Have Your Say" forms permanently available online
- 17 want feedback opportunities designed specifically for underrepresented or rural parent carers
- Only 3 preferred short audio/video submissions
- These results indicate a preference for simple, regular, low effort ways to give feedback, while also valuing face to face opportunities locally



Question 4:

How would you like us to share updates and news with you?



Parents expressed strong preferences for clear, regular, and multichannel communication:

- 27 want regular social media posts with milestones, outcomes, or parent stories
- 26 want targeted topicspecific updates (e.g., education, health, transport)
- 26 want newsletters emailed directly
- 11 want newsletters available on the website
- 16 want termly online Q&A sessions
- 10 want recorded video updates (e.g., Facebook Live, YouTube)
- 6 support an annual report with an online Q&A

The strong preference for email and topical updates highlights the need for consistent, direct, and relevant communication.



Question 5:

Final thoughts (optional)

We received 27 longer comments. In this longer section we summarise what parents said about PCFD, identify themes and describe what we're planning to do to improve. Below, we have grouped the feedback into nine main themes that emerged. For each theme, we have provided a clear explanation of how PCFD works, what we have already improved, and how we will continue responding to what families have told us. Our hope is that this helps build shared understanding, supports stronger trust, and shows how parent voice directly shapes our direction and priorities.

Themes

- 1. Transparency & Governance**
- 2. Visibility & Communication**
- 3. Representation & Inclusivity**
- 4. Trust & Relationships**
- 5. Influence & Driving Change**
- 6. Engagement Format & Access**
- 7. Clarity about what PCFD does**
- 8. Working in Partnership**
- 9. Practical help & Outcomes**

Summary

- Some families shared that they don't fully understand how PCFD works, and that mixed messages or things they've heard from others have made it harder to feel confident in us
- Many parents said they don't always see our updates. Not everyone uses Facebook, so they want information in more places and in clearer, more regular formats
- Some families, including those with children with PMLD or very complex needs, want to feel more included and heard
- Parents want us to be open about how PCFD works — how directors are chosen, how decisions are made, and what happens in our meetings with services
- Families want clearer examples of how their feedback leads to action. Simple and regular updates will help show what difference parent voice makes

1. Transparency & Governance

What some parents said:

“There needs to be more transparency... Why wasn’t the director role advertised? Are the chairs too close to the LA? Need more transparency around directors’ pay.”

Some facts about PCFD & the directors:

- PCFD is a Community Interest Company (CIC) and follows all CIC governance requirements
- CICs are not required to advertise director roles — it is entirely legitimate to appoint directors who are already connected to the work
- PCFD governance is externally monitored by Contact, the national charity that supports all Parent Carer Forums. They have no concerns about PCFD’s governance
- PCFD submits all required documentation to Companies House and meets all legal obligations
- Directors are remunerated for their hours. The amount earned is linked to hours worked
- The PCFD Directors are a team and support each other to be as effective and efficient as possible while also managing their roles as parent carers

How we will communicate this better:

- We will create a new governance page on our website to share policies and documents
- We are currently updating our Financial Control Policy as we are introducing a new Parent Carer Partner role. This will be available to view on our website soon
- Regularly reassure families that independence and integrity are central to the forum’s role



2. Visibility & Communications

What some parents said:

“Don’t assume Facebook reaches everyone.”

What PCFD has already done:

- Launched a new website just before Christmas with clearer information, regular updates, and new stories.
- Planning weekly “This Week at PCFD” updates, compiled into monthly newsletters for non Facebook users
- How we’ll continue improving visibility:
- Share all key information in multiple places (website, email, Facebook)
- Use consistent formats and repeated messaging so no one misses important updates

3. Representation & Inclusivity

What some parents said:

“Be more present in SEND communities... family voices aren’t being heard.”

What PCFD is already doing:

- Continuing to lead our successful SEND Ambassador Volunteer programme in partnership with DIAS – in March 2025 there were 60 Ambassador Volunteers leading groups and connecting families across the county
- Begun visiting local SEND support groups around Devon
- Actively building relationships with group leaders to hear from families where they are
- Encouraging any group to request a visit at a time that suits them

How we’ll strengthen this work:

- Promote the “invite us to your group” offer more visibly and more often.
- Share photos and summaries of group visits to show the reach and diversity of families
- Work with our SEND Ambassador Volunteer Coordinator to connect with and support SEND groups across Devon
- We are planning a survey based on the SEND Local Area inspection Framework to ask families about their experiences

4. Trust & Relationships

What some parents said:

“PCFD has been putting parents down... this has caused anger and lack of trust.”

What we want to clarify

- We want to be absolutely clear: PCFD does not put parents down. This would go against everything we stand for
- Our role is to listen to SEND parent carers across Devon and bring their collective experiences, concerns and priorities forward at a strategic level. We don’t pick and choose whose voices matter – every voice has value, even when views differ or are difficult to hear
- We also understand that comments like this may come from misunderstandings or information shared by others. Rather than dismissing those feelings, we want to respond constructively and transparently

What we have already done since the survey

- To support better understanding of our role and values, we have added new pages to our website that clearly explain
 - What a Parent Carer Forum is
 - What we do
 - What PCFD cannot do – and what we do instead
- These pages were created directly in response to feedback about confusion, misconceptions and mixed messages. Our aim is to make it easier for all families to understand who we are, how we work, and what they can expect from us.

Our commitment to moving forward together

- We will increase visibility of our positive, collaborative work with families
- We will share examples of how parent voices shape the issues we raise with services
- We will plan regular “myth-busting” social media and news posts to help clear up misinformation
- We believe we are stronger together. Families should be able to rely on one another, especially in a system that often feels challenging and inconsistent
- PCFD remains committed to working alongside families — not against them

5. Influence & Driving Change

What some parents said:

“PCF feels wishwashy... not taken seriously by the council... not representing the majority.”

What’s important to understand:

- PCFD has consistently raised concerns about families’ unacceptable experiences in Devon
- The PCF role is to work with, not against, services – coproduction requires that
- Influence often happens behind the scenes, not in public view

What PCFD has done in January 2026:

- Delivered a major presentation on coproduction to 300+ LA staff
- Contributed to Family Hubs training
- Led a Volunteer Day with Devon Information Advice & Support for SEND Ambassador Volunteers
- Ongoing partnership work across Education, Quality, Inclusion, and Health
- Run our first pilot training for our new Parent Carer Partner role
- Introduced our new “Question of the week”

How we’ll show influence more clearly:

- Regular short updates:
“This week in PCFD... Here’s what changed. Etc”
- Monthly newsletters
- Create a new webpage to explain how parent feedback feeds into DCC/NHS decision making
- Create a new area on our website explaining clearly how parent carers and practitioners can get involved in working together
- Share new opportunities to have your say on our website as well as regularly on social media and in our newsletter



6. Engagement Format & Access

What some parents said:

“Create topic subgroups... work with trusted groups... build alliances.”

What PCFD already has:

- A strong countywide SEND Ambassador Volunteer network
- A new three level model of engagement (Coffee Break Contributions → Focused Feedback → Parent Carer Partner opportunities)
- Plans for a longer survey to gather thematic input
- A new Parent Carer Partner role to build constructive collaborative relationships

What we'll do next:

- Regularly advertise and communicate about the three level model and the SEND Ambassador Volunteer programme
- Explain how SEND Ambassadors Volunteers and engagement opportunities feed into decision making.
- Continue building bridges between families and services.
- Regularly share our belief that we are stronger together. Families should be able to rely on one another, especially in a system that often feels challenging and inconsistent.



7. Clarity about what PCFD does

What some parents said:

“What do you actually do? I don’t know what support you offer.”

What we want to make clearer

The survey showed that many families want a straightforward explanation of PCFD’s purpose, how Parent Carer Forums work nationally, and what families can realistically expect from us. This feedback is important — and we’ve already taken steps to address it.

What PCFD has already done

- Added new website pages explaining:
 - What a Parent Carer Forum is
 - What PCFD does
 - What PCFD cannot do — and what we do instead
 - How to get involved, depending on capacity, interest and comfort levels
- Ensured these pages use clear, accessible language and reflect our real day to day work

How we will strengthen this further

- Launch a short, simple information campaign: “PCFD in 60 seconds”, including video, graphics, and short versions
- Add a small link banner to our regular newsletters and updates (“Learn more about what PCFD does”) to help ensure families can always find accurate information quickly
- Continue sharing real examples of where family feedback has shaped decisions, priorities, and service discussions — making our impact easier to understand



8. Working in Partnership

What some parents said:

“Share meetings with DCC/NHS online... collaborate more... I thought PCFD had been disbanded.”

What’s important to understand

- Comments like these highlight two issues:
 - Families don’t always see our partnership work, even though it is happening every week
 - Some families expect PCFD to communicate on behalf of DCC/NHS, but this isn’t how Parent Carer Forums operate

Clarifying our role

- PCFD works with services, not for them. We are independent, but working together is essential for coproduction
- PCFD regularly advises DCC and NHS teams on how they can improve their own communication with families
- The misconception that we were disbanded reflects visibility gaps, not inactivity — and we are addressing this through the improvements in Themes 2 and 5

What we will do next to show this more clearly

- Publish regular “meetings attended” summaries — short, accessible bullet points highlighting what we raised and why it matters.
- Add a “Working with partners” section to the website that explains:
 - the purpose of partnership working
 - what coproduction is
 - what families can expect from these meetings
- Share more examples of joint work, such as training sessions, working groups, consultations and service projects
- Continue reinforcing our message: working together strengthens parent voice and drives change more effectively than working in isolation

9. Practical Help & Outcomes

What some parents said:

“Tickbox exercise... no outcomes... no support”

What we want to clarify

- Many parents understandably hope for individual support or case level action. However, nationally, Parent Carer Forums do not provide services, resolve individual cases or make decisions. Our role is to:
 - listen to families
 - identify shared themes
 - bring concerns and experiences into strategic discussions
 - work alongside services to shape improvements
- We influence change — we don’t implement it.

Important clarity about PCFD’s role

- PCFD is not a support service or advocacy provider.
- PCFD cannot intervene in individual cases — this is how Parent Carer Forums function nationally
- Our role is to amplify family experiences and work collaboratively with services to improve the system
- Any changes made as a result of parent voice are decisions made by DCC, NHS, schools and other service providers, not by PCFD

How we will communicate outcomes more clearly

- To help families see the difference their voices make — while also being honest about who is responsible for action — we will:
 - Work with services to encourage “What we’ve heard and what we’re doing” updates
 - These updates come from the services, not PCFD
 - They show how parent feedback has influenced what services plan to do next
 - They demonstrate shared ownership of change
- Share simple visuals explaining the journey from parent voice to system improvement:
Parent experience → PCFD gathers and themes → Services consider and respond → Service change
- Include examples in our regular updates of where feedback raised by families through PCFD has shaped discussions or decisions
- Add clear explanations on our website about what outcomes PCFD can reasonably influence, and which outcomes sit entirely with services

Progress

What We've Already Done

- Launched a clearer, more accessible website with pages explaining what PCFD does, what we don't do, and how to get involved.
- Increased our presence in local SEND groups and strengthened the SEND Ambassador Volunteer network.
- Responded openly to concerns about trust, clarity, and misinformation with new myth-busting and clearer messaging.
- Continued strong partnership work across education, health and inclusion, including training, presentations, and new engagement roles.

What We Plan to do Next

- Make governance, decision-making and PCFD processes easier to understand with new website pages and simple explanations
- Expand how we communicate — more platforms, more consistency, and clearer messages
- Strengthen relationships with SEND communities through more group visits and inclusive engagement opportunities
- Start regular updates ("This Week at PCFD" and monthly newsletters) to improve visibility beyond Facebook
- Show influence more clearly through short weekly updates and a new webpage explaining how parent voice feeds into service decisions
- Encourage services to publish "What we've heard and what we're doing" updates, making outcomes more visible without placing responsibility on PCFD
- Use simple visuals and plain language to explain our system-level role and what families can expect from us

In One Sentence

PCFD is already making significant improvements based on parent feedback, and we are committed to working more openly, visibly, and collaboratively so that families across Devon can see — and feel — the impact of their voices on the system.

Thank You

We are grateful for the honesty and passion reflected in the feedback we received. Every comment — whether based on concern, frustration, encouragement or misunderstanding — helps us improve the way we communicate, connect and work alongside families across Devon.

As a Parent Carer Forum, our role is unique. We are not a service provider, a support group, a complaints route, or a substitute for statutory responsibilities. We are a collective voice for parent carers, working in partnership with services to influence positive change. That work can sometimes be invisible, sometimes slower than any of us would like, and sometimes limited by the systems we are trying to improve. But it is always guided by the lived experiences of families.

This feedback has shown us where we need to communicate more clearly, where we need to make our work more visible, and where we need to help families better understand what Parent Carer Forums can — and cannot — do. It has also highlighted the importance of continuing the progress we have already begun: more engagement with SEND groups, clearer messaging, regular updates, and creating multiple pathways for families to share their experiences with us.

We remain committed to working with families and services in a constructive, collaborative way. Trust grows through consistency, visibility and honesty — and this response is one step in that direction. We hope the clarifications provided help strengthen understanding, reduce misconceptions, and build a more confident partnership between PCFD and the parent carers we represent.

If you have further thoughts or want to be more involved at any level, we warmly welcome you to get in touch. Your voice continues to shape our work, our priorities, and the changes we seek together.

