

6th Oct 2021

Dear Tomas and Caroline,

I wanted to advise you that the local authority have raised some concerns with me about the forum and have asked me to pass these on to you.

The concerns are that forum steering group members are currently involved in lobbying and campaigning activity alongside and concurrent to their Bristol Parent Carer Forum Rep role which is not what the LA's grant is intended for and therefore falls outside of the conditions of this funding.

As you know lobbying and campaigning activity are also not permissible within the DfE Parent Participation grant either and so if this activity is taking place it does jeopardise both of the funding streams for the forum. The reason that these activities are not permissible is that the intention of the PP grant is to fund forums to work alongside their LA colleagues and in order to do this both parties need to be able to trust each other, share confidential information and the experience of SEND families about receiving services. Campaigning and lobbying groups are a very important part of our democracy, but they do not work alongside the local authority and instead take a more adversarial position. Therefore being an active member of both a forum and a campaign group is a conflict of interest, and it is for this reason that the DfE grant cannot be used to fund campaigning activities.

I have asked the Local Authority for further information regarding these concerns and also have suggested that they talk to yourselves and representatives of the forum directly as soon as possible. However, I do know that there is work happening now between the forum steering group and the LA, and understand that this situation puts everyone concerned in a difficult position.

Therefore, I suggest that you share this information with the other members of the steering group so that everyone is aware of the situation, and also can discuss whether it might be advisable to temporarily pause forum and LA engagement activities until such time as the issues can be understood more fully and hopefully resolved.

I am available to discuss this further if needed and will continue to stay in touch.

All best wishes

Heather Tarbuck
Parent Participation Adviser
Contact