

Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers

Terms of Reference

The Alliance is a coalition of organisations that work with children and young people who are in care or who have left care, and that share a commitment to improving the care system in England.

Objective

To work together to improve the care system and the outcomes of young people who spend time in care.

What the Alliance will do

The Alliance aims to provide a strong, unified voice to influence policy-makers at local, regional and national level on issues relating to children in care and care leavers.

It also provides a forum for member organisations to share information, identify areas of common interest, explore ideas, debate priorities and to identify specific issues on which members can campaign and lobby on collectively (where this is likely to achieve more than doing so separately).

Values

Alliance members share and sign up to the following values:

- The needs of the child must come first and be at the centre of practice
- Children's diversity and individuality must be recognised and valued
- The views and opinions of children must be taken into account when any decision is being made about their lives.
- All decisions made about a child, must be explained to them in a manner appropriate to their level of understanding.
- Children's individual and collective involvement in decisions must be facilitated and supported
- The relationships that matter to the child must be recognised and valued
- Children's rights must be recognised and upheld
- The child has priority over organisational considerations
- The workforce should be supported and developed to be child-centred

Membership

Membership is open to any non-governmental organisation that works directly with children in care and/or care leavers and is committed to pursuing the purpose of the Alliance in the manner indicated and who are able to sign-up to these Terms of Reference.

Organisations seeking to become members should apply to the Secretariat in writing, stating why they want to become members and committing to the objectives and values of the Alliance.

The Secretariat will discuss applications for membership with the Chairs, who will make a recommendation to all members at the following main meeting.

Organisations are members rather than individuals. An individual attending on behalf of an organisation is seen as a representative of that organisation. They therefore must be able to do so with the permission of their organisation.

They must take principal responsibility for communicating back to their organisation the work of the Alliance and as such be seen as the primary contact point for that organisation with regards to the Alliance.

It is also acceptable for different individuals from the same organisation to be on the membership mailing list, although one would be the principle contact point as mentioned above. Normally up to two people from each organisation would attend Alliance Meetings, although in certain circumstances this may be increased. It would further the work of the Alliance if there is some consistency regarding involvement of individual staff from member organisations.

It is expected that members should participate fully in the work of the Alliance by attending most meetings and being actively involved in working groups and other work of the Alliance as this reflects the action-orientated nature of this body.

Members pay an annual fee (£100 for organisations with a turnover of over £1million and £50 for organisations with a turnover of less than £1million commencing from start of the financial year 2017/18) which is subject to review annually.

Organisations which are constitutionally unable to be members of the Alliance may be permitted to take observer status, subject to a) their committing to the Alliance values and objectives and b) approval by the Alliance membership.

Resources

The membership fees will be paid to the Secretariat organisation which will manage Alliance expenditure and report to members annually on income and expenditure.

The work is made possible by the time, commitment and skill given by the members. In this sense all of the above will be shaped by how much of that time is available at any given moment.

Branding

The Alliance logo should be included on publications and promotional materials produced by the Alliance or are promoting events and conferences organised by the Alliance.

Chairing, Working Groups and Secretariat Support

Chairs

The Alliance has two co-chairs, one of whom will hold the Secretariat position.

The co-chairs are held by an organisation and is responsible for the strategic overview of the Alliance. They should fulfil the following responsibilities:

- To steer the Alliance towards greater effectiveness in acting as a unified force for children in care and care leavers.
- To encourage and facilitate the sharing of information, views and good practice among member organisations.
- To chair Alliance meetings in an effective and inclusive manner, ensuring that all members are able to contribute, agenda issues are discussed and action points followed up.
- To coordinate the representation of the Alliance at meetings with senior officials, Ministers and key stakeholders and act as signatories for correspondence on behalf of the Alliance.
- To sign off consultation responses and external communications from the Alliance prior to dissemination.
- To work closely with the Secretariat to ensure they are able to fulfil their duties in supporting the activities of the Alliance. The Secretariat will be provided by one or both of the organisation's that the co-chairs work for.

Co-chairs will be elected by a simple majority of voting Alliance members. A role description and person specification has been agreed for the chair position. The term of office will be two years. The sitting chair may be re-elected. Elections are held by secret ballot.

Working groups

Working groups of the Alliance will be formed from the Membership to take forward specific tasks or activities relating to the work of the Alliance. These may be short-term or one-off activities, such as preparing a joint statement in response to a specific development. Or they may have a longer view such as monitoring the implementation of legislation.

These working groups will have an appointed Lead Member who will be responsible for coordinating the working group, feeding back and consulting with co-chairs, and regularly keeping the full membership up to date.

Working group Leads should volunteer by informing co-chairs. If more than one member would like to be Lead, the role can be shared. The full membership should agree the appointment of working group Leads.

The Full membership will agree to the establishment of the working groups and their specific terms of reference at main meetings. In doing so members give their permission for working groups to take a lead on activity and ensure that the Alliance's activity is carried out in line with the values outlined in the terms of reference.

It is envisaged that by definition working groups will be small and that they should cease to operate when no longer needed.

Secretariat

Secretariat support is provided by one of the member organisations. This arrangement will be reviewed by the membership every two years.

The functions of the Secretariat are primarily organisation and hosting of meetings, minute-taking and distribution, co-ordination of actions agreed at meetings, fielding

queries from member organisations, managing elections, keeping the online presence of the Alliance up to date.

Meetings

The Alliance will meet quarterly, with the option of additional meetings when necessary. The full membership will attend quarterly meetings. The co-chairs and working groups will meet additionally as necessary.

Decisions about Alliance activity and policy positions will be taken at main meetings. Minutes of the meetings will be shared by secretariat further to each meeting. Working groups should feed into main meetings in a timely fashion, and consult the full membership on any activity or decisions required.

Media statements will be signed off by the co-chairs and shared with members for comment when time permits.

These terms of reference will be reviewed every two years.