



# Terms of Reference

## 1. Early Childhood Forum

The Early Childhood Forum (ECF) is a coalition of early years professional associations, voluntary organisations and interest groups united in their concern about the rights, health, well-being, learning and development of young children from pre-birth to seven, their families, carers and their communities and the practitioners who work with them.

## 2. ECF Vision and Aim

ECF aims to bring together a coalition of early years professional associations/partners to promote inclusion and challenge inequalities, and to champion quality experiences for all young children from pre-birth to seven and their families, carers and their communities.

## 3. ECF Values

3.1 ECF believes that all babies and young children have a right to high quality care and experiences that promote their emotional and physical health and development.

3.2 ECF believes that inclusion and equality should be central to all early childhood experiences and provision. ECF's inclusion statement states that 'Inclusion is a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging'.

3.3 ECF believes that play is an essential experience for all children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 31 states that 'Every child has the right to rest, play, and to do things they enjoy.'

3.4 ECF believes that it is essential to promote young children's education, health and emotional well-being, with a focus on the whole child, through working with families, carers and their communities.

3.5 ECF believes that all organisations should work together in an integrated approach.



## 4. Activities

ECF is committed to working with its membership organisations collaboratively and collectively on a range of activities.

4.1 Providing support, advice and expertise on early childhood for the sector and Government.

4.2 Building new relationships with families, carers and their communities and organisations across early childhood and government.

4.3 Supporting members' professional development and sharing knowledge.

4.4 Influencing local and national policy and practice to improve the experiences of all young children.

4.5 Listening to children, their families, carers and their communities, to influence ECF's policy and activities.

4.6 Using evidence from research to better understand the developmental needs of babies and children from conception through to age seven.

4.7 Developing resources and initiating and supporting projects with partner organisations.

## 5. Funding

ECF funds its core purposes through annual subscriptions from its membership organisations, and relies also on contributions in kind from its membership organisations such as free rooms for meetings, shared publicity, and most of all, members' time to attend meetings and undertake activities with and on behalf of the ECF coalition.

## 6. Remit

6.1 ECF represents early years professional organisations with a full or partial focus on early childhood (pre-birth to seven). Note: not all members organisations are



'professional' and not all are totally early years.

6.2 ECF's geographical remit is England.

6.3 Attend main meetings to which all ECF members and observers are invited take place three times a year. These meetings may be held virtually or in person.

## **7. Management and co-ordination.**

7.1 The Chair is elected from within ECF's membership.

7.2 The post is for 3 years and elections will take place in the autumn of an election year.

7.3 The role of the Chair is to

- Chair all main meetings and steering group meetings
- Take responsibility for elements of the work programme e.g. developing policy positions, campaign activities etc.
- Represent ECF - or delegate to other ECF members - at external meetings and events
- Act as a spokesperson for ECF
- Provide direct communication with members
- Plus Steering Group responsibilities (see point 7.7)

7.4 The Vice Chair will be required to deputise for the Chair when appropriate.

7.5 The Steering Group is comprised of:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Treasurer
- 4 ECF members

7.6 The Steering Group meets at least three times a year and when necessary.

7.7 The role of Steering Group members is to



- Represent a range of perspectives in early childhood
- Support the Chair to develop ECF's work
- Support the Chair in the preparation of agendas and papers for ECF meetings
- Attend meetings and conferences to share the load with the Chair
- Take responsibility for specific projects e.g. consultation responses, printed resources, campaign activities
- Attend main and steering group meetings
- Actively take part in steering group discussions and ensure that decisions taken reflect the full ECF membership
- Represent ECF at external meetings, including with Government and policy makers
- Consider all matters relating to membership applications and make recommendations to ECF members
- Act as a spokesperson for ECF

7.8 If an elected Steering Group member leaves their current organisation during their term, then they will be expected to stand down.

7.9 To be quorate 4 members of the Steering Group including the Chair or Vice Chair must be present at meetings.

## 8. Membership

8.1 To become a full member an organisation must fulfil the following criteria:

- Member organisations of ECF must work wholly or in part for children from pre-birth to seven and have a policy, practice or research function.
- Member organisations are ones that represent specific aspects/issues/concerns of the early childhood sector nationally.
- Member organisations should have a policy for equality and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Member organisations must be prepared to sign up to the ECF policy agenda.
- All member representatives must represent the full views of their organisation and agree to report back to the organisation which they represent on the Forum.
- Every member organisation must empower their representative to contribute fully to the work of the Forum and when requested and whenever possible, respond to relevant documents.



- In order to remain in membership of ECF, organisations must normally be represented at least once out of three meetings during the calendar year.
- If a substitute member is to attend a meeting the Chair must be notified in advance.

8.2 Members are currently asked to pay an annual membership subscription, currently set at £120 a year. This entitles members to:

- Attend three main meetings to engage with expert speakers, access professional development sessions and to discuss policy and practice issues with early childhood colleagues
- Actively participate in the development of ECF's work and more general Forum activities, including lobbying, projects and events
- Stand for election as Chair or Steering Group member to influence ECF's future development at a strategic decision-making level.
- Members should consult the Chair before speaking publicly on behalf of ECF.

8.3 Membership categories:

**Members**, as above

**Observer status** is offered to government department and non-departmental public bodies and individuals where their expertise is beneficial to ECF. Observers are invited to attend ECF meetings to update members on current policy and activities and provide a two-way dialogue. They have no voting rights and cannot hold Chair or Steering Group posts.

**Associate membership** is offered to representatives from member organisations who have left their post, but still wish to engage with the work of ECF. They are invited to an annual meeting with ECF's Steering Group. They may be invited to attend individual meetings so that ECF can draw on their particular knowledge, understanding and skills.

**Partnership membership** is offered to organisations who are considering full membership. They would have observer status for one year when they will have to decide if they wish to become full members and pay the annual fee.

## 9. Reviewing Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the Steering Group annually and any



significant changes will be communicated to the membership.

**Note.** Throughout this document, the definition of 'early childhood' encompasses the period from conception to age seven.

### **More information**

Visit the ECF website at [www.earlychildhoodforum.org](http://www.earlychildhoodforum.org)

Contact the Chair, on [earlychildhoodforum@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:earlychildhoodforum@yahoo.co.uk)

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