Terms of Reference for Parent and Carers Staff Network

Introduction

Everyone should feel safe, supported and comfortable at work, where they feel able to be themselves without experiencing discrimination or harassment. People perform better when they can be themselves. Sussex staff networks ensure that the University hears the voices of a wide range of people and to fully understand and address the barriers to equal representation, progression and reward. The networks enable staff to be consulted as part of our decision making processes and development of major changes which have an impact on staff.

Membership

The Parent and Carers Staff Network[1] is for staff who identify as having caring responsibilities.

Objectives of the network

The network aims to meet clearly identified objectives:

1. To create an open, supportive, inclusive and welcoming culture, in order to create a space for all staff who define into the network.

2. To provide peer support for staff e.g. through social events; support for individual staff experiencing difficulties.

3. To increase awareness and make caring experiences more visible in the wider campus community, and to promote a better understanding of carers inclusion, e.g. through briefings and other information sharing activities; consultation systems.

4. To contribute to the University's plan of work and to help ensure that parent and carer inclusion is embedded across the University, e.g. by assisting with policy development through active engagement in consultation and contribution to equality analysis, reviewing promotional materials; offering advice on monitoring and training; communicating concerns and experiences to senior management.

5. To collaborate and establish connections with other networks in the University for the benefit of all members and for the wider community.

6. To build meaningful collaborations with other local, national and international carers groups.

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[1] NOTE This model assumes that networks are not open to allies. Friends of network groups can be set up to empower allies to work closely with staff networks if the networks are keen to do this.

Senior management support and reporting structure

It is widely recognised that commitment from senior leaders – and communications from them to make this commitment clear – is critical to parent and carer inclusion and ensuring the success of the staff network. The designated senior sponsor at the University of Sussex is the academic lead for EDI, who acts as a point of contact for feedback and escalation to the Inclusive Sussex Programme Board.

Network Structure

Staff networks can agree on how formal or informal they wish their structures to be. This may be influenced by the size and diversity of the membership. As the network has formal roles within the University structure it is important that it is able to accurately represent its membership rather than the views of a few individuals, e.g. in any consultation or in feeding back concerns.

Networks can consider formal or informal steering groups with fixed or rotating chairs. All networks should appoint a Network Chair. The Network Chair will organise any network meetings, manage the shared mailbox for the group and ensure that any formal responses to consultation are collated and sent to reflect the views of the network. They will also manage the network's social media accounts unless this is allocated to another network member. The Network Chair will liaise with the EDI Unit over any events that require central support/budget.

Confidentiality

A key aim of networks is to support colleagues and encourage them to participate. For some networks members may not wish their membership to be shared as by doing so it may make public information in relation they wish to remain private, e.g. disability, gender identity, sexual orientation. Networks must consider whether a confidentiality statement needs to be confirmed by those joining their network.