

# Chair of Trustees Report

## Financial Year 2024–2025 with Reflections on 2025–2026

For Parent Carer Council Shropshire (PACC)

This year has been one of significant challenge, growth, and determination for PACC and the wider SEND community across Shropshire. As Chair of Trustees, I remain incredibly proud of the dedication shown by our staff team, volunteers, parent carer representatives, trustees, and, most importantly, the families who continue to share their experiences so openly and courageously.

PACC exists to ensure that parent carers are listened to, informed, connected, and able to influence the decisions that affect their children and young people. Throughout 2024–2025 we have continued to strengthen this role through our three key areas of work: Influence and Change, Information Provision, and Community Support.

Over the last year, community need has continued to rise sharply. Families repeatedly shared experiences of long waiting times, difficulties accessing assessments and support, challenges within education settings, emotionally exhausting EHCP processes, increasing mental health pressures, and anxiety around transitions into adulthood. Many parent carers also described exhaustion, isolation, financial pressure, and a sense that they were having to “fight” continually to secure appropriate support for their children.

In response, PACC has continued to provide safe and trusted opportunities for families to be heard. Through surveys, workshops, school engagement, navigator conversations, peer support activities, social media groups, and direct contact with families, we have gathered vital lived experience evidence which has informed our strategic representation work with education, health, and social care partners.

A key strength of PACC remains that we are an independent parent carer-led organisation. Families consistently tell us that they value being listened to by people who genuinely understand the realities of life as a SEND family. This trust enables us to identify emerging issues early, challenge constructively where systems are not working well, and contribute meaningfully to co-production discussions across Shropshire.

During 2024–2025, PACC continued to expand its information and navigation support offer. Families increasingly needed clear, accessible guidance to help them understand a highly complex SEND system. Our navigator support, workshops, myth-busting resources, and information briefings helped parent carers make informed decisions and participate more confidently in discussions about support and provision. We also strengthened our work around Preparing for Adulthood, recognising the growing concerns families face as young people move toward adult services and greater independence.

Community support activity also remained a vital part of our work. Families frequently told us that isolation continues to be one of the most difficult aspects of being a parent carer. Opportunities to connect with others who understand their experiences have enormous value. Through events, activities, peer support opportunities, and community programmes, PACC

helped families build supportive relationships, reduce isolation, and create positive experiences together.

Strategically, PACC has continued to ensure that parent carer voices are represented within local discussions about SEND improvement and service development. Our representatives have contributed to a wide range of meetings, working groups, consultations, and co-production activity across education, health, and social care. This work is often complex and long term, but it remains essential if services are to become more responsive, transparent, and accountable to families. We have continued to champion aspirational outcomes for children and young people with SEND while ensuring the realities faced by families are not overlooked.

As we reflect on 2025–2026, there are clear signs that pressures on SEND systems nationally and locally continue to intensify. Demand for support is rising, while many services remain under considerable strain. However, this also reinforces why PACC’s role is more important than ever. Families need strong, independent representation, reliable information, and opportunities to shape the future of services.

Looking ahead, PACC will continue to focus on strengthening parent carer participation, improving access to accurate information, supporting family wellbeing, and ensuring lived experience remains central to local decision-making. We will continue to advocate courageously for meaningful change while also recognising and celebrating positive partnership working where it exists.

On behalf of the Trustee Board, I would like to thank every family who has shared their experiences with us this year. Your voices are the foundation of everything we do. I would also like to thank our staff team, volunteers, representatives, partners, and fellow trustees for their commitment, compassion, and resilience throughout another demanding year.

Together, we continue to work towards making Shropshire a place where SEND families can truly thrive.

As this is also my final year serving as both Chair of Trustees and as a trustee of PACC, I would like to take a moment for personal reflection. After 12 years on the Board, this role has been a hugely important part of my life and one that I have been deeply proud to hold.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting and working alongside extraordinary parent carers, young people, professionals, volunteers, and community leaders. Together, we have seen PACC grow into a respected and influential organisation that has helped ensure the voices of families remain central to conversations about SEND services and support across Shropshire.

Being part of PACC has not only allowed me to support others, but has also helped me grow personally and professionally. The experiences, confidence, knowledge, and

leadership skills I have developed through parent participation and trustee leadership have played an important part in enabling me to move into new professional opportunities and employment. I believe this is one of the often unseen strengths of organisations like PACC, that while parent carers come seeking support and community, many also discover new confidence, purpose, skills, and pathways for themselves along the way.

I hope this serves as encouragement to other parent carers in our community. The knowledge and lived experience gained through advocacy, participation, volunteering, and leadership are valuable and transferable, and can open doors to new opportunities, both personally and professionally.

While I may now be stepping away from governance, I remain incredibly proud of everything PACC has achieved and grateful to everyone who has been part of that journey. I leave with sincere hope for the organisation's future and for the continued strength and resilience of the parent carer community in Shropshire. As the next few years ahead are going to possibly be the SEND communities hardest yet as we navigate another set of reforms.

So, for now at least, I will support the changes ahead in other ways, and watch as PACC continues to be the champion and support network Shropshire's SEND community needs.