

**Nottingham City Children's Partnership**

# **Children and Young People's Participation Strategy**

## **Our vision**

Nottingham is a city where all children, young people and families are listened to and involved in the decisions that affect their lives. Our services actively engage children, young people and families and use their views and experiences to inform plans and improve outcomes for both individuals and services. We have systems in place to support participation work and our workforce has the skills and knowledge needed to ensure the views of children, young people and families are heard and make a difference. Participation is embedded in our culture and practice

## **Values and drivers**

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children and young people have a basic right to have a say and be taken seriously in all matters which affect them and requires government organisations to actively engage them in decision making.

Empowering children and young people to participate in decision making about their own lives and affect the development of services that support them is a key objective of the Children's Partnership and is a value embedded within the Children and Young People's Plan.

The Munro review and new Ofsted Safeguarding and Multi-agency inspection frameworks make explicit the responsibility of local authorities and their partners to empower, listen to and act on the voice of the child throughout their journey through services. This is particularly important for children and young people in care, care leavers and those on the edge of care, those under a Child Protection order; and those at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.

Our Strategic Commissioning pathway commits us to co-produce each stage of the review process. We have developed tools for supporting participation of children and young people in reviews and will continue to roll these out across the Children's Partnership.

The Children and Families SEN Act places a requirement to involve SEND children, young people and family carers in the development and delivery of local offers, with representation of young citizens and their parents and carers in programme workstreams and at governance level.

The Council's Family Support Pathway and Early Help Strategies provide the context for participation in targeted and specialist services, including work around Priority Families, Common Assessment Framework referrals and Young Carers.. Additional drivers include participation for inclusion by LGBT and BME communities, and work to prevent radicalisation and support community cohesion.



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## **Types of participation**

Participation is the meaningful involvement by citizens in the decision making processes which affect their lives. The three types of participation covered by this strategy are:

**Individual participation**, where a citizen is involved in the planning and design of his or her own service plan or pathway plan, including for example care pathways, personalised budgets, personal education and health plans. Ensuring the individual child has a say in decisions about his or her life and service provision is the bedrock of good participation practice.

**Social participation**, for example through engaging with services or through specific social action projects, community-based youth and play work or school-based citizenship programmes where young citizens are motivated to be involved in their community and participate in the design and delivery of activities and programmes. Active citizenship skills are developed and service providers have opportunities to engage with children and young people in their own environment.

**Public participation**, typically through involvement in forums or councils, participation in surveys and consultations or through activities linked to quality assurance and improvement of services (such as inspection, mystery shopping and involvement in recruitment), and representation on boards and committees. This work has the potential to make strategic as well as operational impact, with children and young people helping shape decision making at senior level.

Our strategy aims to ensure children and young people have opportunities for meaningful participation across all three contexts, depending on the needs and aspirations of the individual, and to demonstrate through clear evidence the impact their voices have on improving services and the quality of provision for young citizens.

## **Models for Engagement and Participation**

There are a number of models and tools to support our understanding and practice of participation.

*Sharing the Future*, developed locally by colleagues from Nottingham City Council and the Youth Cabinet, Lincolnshire County Council and Nottingham University, is the preferred model for explaining how and why we engage children and young people for participation. Details of the model are found in Appendix 1.

Children's Social Care team workers and other targeted and specialist services use *Signs of Safety* as their standard engagement toolkit.

## **Participation Charters and surveys**

We communicate our commitments to provide high quality services to children and young people through a series of charters. These charters promote and support a culture of engagement and participation across the partnership, ensuring that our services listen to and respond positively to children and young people's views, using their experiences to make improvements.

The charters are:

- Children and Young People's Charter
- Parents' and Carers' Charter
- Children in Care and Care Leavers' Charter

The Children in Care and Care Leavers' Charter is supported by an annual Have Your Say survey for all children and young people receiving services in these areas. The information from these surveys is used to inform action plans to improve relevant services and is also incorporated into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to provide an evidence base for other partners to use. Young people play a key role in assessing survey results and recommending areas for improvement, and monitoring progress.

## **Opportunities for Children and Young People**

### **1. Individual participation**

We aim to provide every child and young person with the opportunity to have their say about the services they receive, and we promote a culture of ongoing engagement and participation across the Children's Partnership. We provide opportunities for individual participation across Targeted and Specialist services and we have processes in place to ensure that the Targeted and Specialist workforce, including social care workers, work in a way that empowers all children and young people so that can have a say in their own pathway plans.

We are developing systems that accurately capture and record the voice of the child and ensure that actions arising from their wishes and feelings are acted on and results fed back. We want to be able to make information on wishes and feelings easily and clearly accessible to other professionals so that the child's voice stays in view throughout their journey through our services. We will continue to provide opportunities for those with individual care plans to lead the processes that support their care, e.g through chairing review meetings, placement panel meetings

Relevant partners include:

- Nottingham Children's Safeguarding Board partner organisations
- Corporate Parenting Board members and partner organisations
- Children in Care Team

- Targeted and Specialist services including Child Protection, Child in Need and CAF teams

In 2015-16 we will:

- ***Manage the Have Your Say survey process to ensure Children in Care and Care Leavers have an opportunity to share their views, experiences and ideas for change with the Corporate Parenting Board***
- ***Set up new Corporate Children in Care Council meetings as part of the CiC Council calendar to provide a forum for young people's engagement with senior officers from Children's Social Care team***
- ***Support projects including Protect and Respect and GREAT to ensure participation of children and young people in the development of services addressing child sexual exploitation and domestic violence risks***
- ***Monitor the level and quality of participation of children and young people receiving specialist and targeted services through the Quality Assurance Strategy process, including audits of Children in Need, Child Protection and LAC reviews***
- ***Identify ways in which the views, experiences and ideas for change of children and young people receiving targeted and specialist services can be aggregated and inform plans for improvement; design and implement an action plan to achieve this***
- ***Support the delivery of priority areas for participation as identified in Safeguarding Board Communication and Engagement Plan***

## 2. Social participation

We aim to ensure all children and young people have the opportunity to participate in active citizenship activities in their neighbourhood, both at school and in the community.

The National Citizenship Service offers young people the opportunity to engage in social action projects to benefit the community while acquiring skills and knowledge for active citizenship. We are a valued partner in this work and contribute towards skills development for the NCS cohort and ensure the programme is linked to relevant neighbourhood partners.

Relevant partners:

- Early Help children's centre, play and youth teams
- Neighbourhood Services
- City schools, academies and colleges
- National Citizenship Service
- NCVS partners
- Strategic Commissioning Team

In 2015-16 we will:

- ***Support the Early Help service to listen to the views of children and young people through participation-based projects in play, youth and early years settings***
- ***Support National Citizenship Service to deliver its programme and link to strategic programmes including Bite the Ballot***
- ***Improve processes for capturing and recording information from social participation into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and strategic commissioning reviews, in particular the Child Development review***
- ***Support voluntary sector development through participation training including briefings to Children and Young people's Provider Network and bespoke workforce development activities***

### **3. Public participation**

We aim to provide opportunities for high-quality participation in strategic decision making activities through the Participation in Governance Programme. This is a programme of meetings and activities that enables children and young people to regularly come together with partners from the Children's Partnership to influence strategic decision making through consultation and co-productive working, in particular on strategic commissioning reviews and major transformation programmes. The programme includes the following groups:

- Youth Cabinet: leadership group for young people aged 16-19. Members sit on various boards and steering groups and help manage the Participation in Governance programme.
- Youth Council: Termly convention of young people from projects and participation groups across the city. Early Help strategy themes of Learning City; Resilient City; Healthy City
- Primary Parliament: Twice-termly convention of year 5 and 6 children from city primary schools. Agenda as Youth Council above, with activities differentiated for age.
- Children in Care Council: Participation group for young people in care and care leavers. Members from the group sit on the Corporate Parenting Board and contribute to assessment of the annual CiC and Care Leaver's *Have Your Say* survey
- Special People Group: A participation group for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including physical disability, learning disability and autism.
- Action for Young Carers; participation forum and activity groups for children and young people with caring responsibilities, aged from 5 to 19

Relevant partners:

- Children's Partnership Board members and partner organisations
- Corporate Parenting Board members and partner organisations
- Councillors and senior council officers including Directors and Heads of Service
- National organisations including MPs and Government agencies
- Strategic Commissioning Team

In 2015-16 we will:

- ***Deliver the Participation in Governance programme with Youth Cabinet, Youth Council, Primary Parliament meetings each term***
- ***Theme meetings linked to CYP Plan priorities (Education, Work and Training; Safe Lives, Positive Neighbourhoods; Healthy, Creative You) and work with partners to provide opportunities for them to engagement with children and young people and co-produce strategies and plans together***
- ***Double the number of Primary Parliament meetings each term and increase the number of primary schools taking part to 100 (40 uniques)***
- ***Deliver the Debate Science youth science parliament programme locally and at European Science Open Forum 2016***

## **Resources, tools and monitoring**

We have a range of tools to support engagement and participation work, as well as links to resources and toolkits developed by other local authorities and national participation agencies. We will continue to encourage use of these to support workforce-led and peer-led activities and make available these resources online.

A series of reports from the East Midlands Regional Participation Leads Group have established regional best practice standards and we reference these in the development of our local plans and approaches. The document "*Framework guidance for participation of service users in Strategic Commissioning Reviews*" is the benchmark document for commissioners undertaking citizen engagement within the commissioning cycle and we aim to develop similar standards for strategic procurement and neighbourhood-based services. In 2015-16 we will:

- ***Establish Sharing the Future as the preferred participation model for NCC***
- ***Create online toolkit for Research, Engagement and Consultation team website including Sharing the Future tools and case studies***
- ***Ensure work is linked to post-Ofsted improvement plan are met and reported, including quarterly monitoring requirements on Covalent***

## **Workforce development**

We will continue to build the capacity of our workforce to empower children and young people to have a strong voice. In addition to actions to improve workforce capacity in Targeted and Specialist service areas we will provide opportunities for training and development across the wider Children and Families workforce. In 2015-16 we will:

- ***Provide Signs of Safety training to internal and external partners including voluntary sector***
- ***Provide workforce development support to Early Help service play and youth workers to develop their capacity to deliver participation-based work in neighbourhoods***