



# Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2020-25

## Scoping Paper

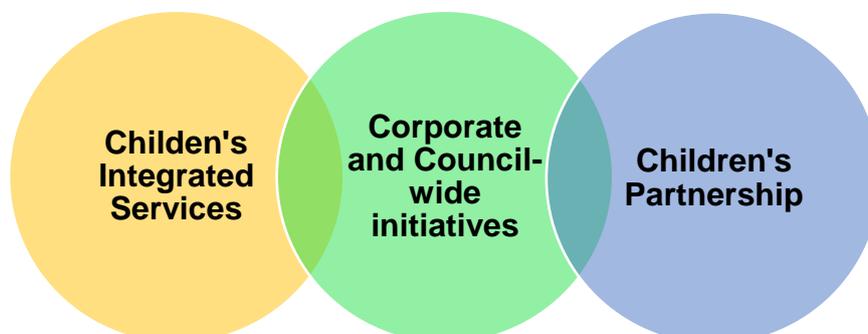
### 1. Context and background

The purpose of this scoping paper is to establish the basis for the newly refreshed Children and Young People's (CYP) Participation Strategy. The current CYP Participation Strategy was initiated by the formation of the Children's Partnership Board and development of the Children & Young People's Plan. Since then it has served as an enabling document for the Partnership, and has provided actions for delivery of participation groups, activities and processes within the Council and its partnerships. Refreshing the strategy to better address current and future needs has been identified as a key action in the Children and Families at the Heart improvement programme.

The strategy addresses the engagement and participation requirements and objectives of the following:

1. Children's Integrated Services - specific participation needs
2. Wider Children' Partnership partners including voluntary sector providers
3. Corporate partners, including internal Council partners and strategic stakeholders

**Fig 1.**



## 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. This ethos underpins a range of national and local level drivers.

Participation is a cross-cutting value embedded in Children and Young People's Plan and features commonly in the work and organisational cultures of our partners. However, feedback from Ofsted after their Focused Visit in Feb 2020 identified improvements required in social work practice to ensure that children's voice is heard and informs their plan, ensuring that we understand what life is like for children and what needs to change.

Other drivers include the reforms outlined in the Children and Families Act (2014) which places a requirement to involve children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their parents/carers in the development and delivery of local offers, with representation of young citizens and their parents and carers in programme work streams and at governance level.

The Council's Family Support Pathway provides the context for participation in targeted and specialist services. Additional drivers include participation for inclusion of under-represented and marginalised communities, and work to prevent radicalisation and support community cohesion.

The current ways of working required during Covid-19 present opportunities to rethink and strengthen our use of technology to support participation and an increasing reliance on virtual methods of maintaining contact with children, young people and families during the lockdown period presents both challenges and opportunities that need to inform any future Strategy.

## Vision

The current strategy articulates a vision for Nottingham as:

**'A city where all children, young people and families are listened to and involved in the decisions that affect their lives. 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. Systems are 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.'**

This ambitious vision remains relevant. However, there has been uneven progress towards achieving its goals, with particular challenges around establishing a culture of participation in the workforce; application of consistent processes to support the voice of the child and evidence impact on outcomes; and participation of vulnerable children and young people.

## Types of Participation

Participation is the meaningful involvement by citizens in the decision-making processes which affect their lives. This definition, and the different types of participation used by the strategy have

been developed by the East Midlands Regional Participation Leads Group and agreed by EMDCS group. The three types of participation are:

**Individual participation** - where a child is involved in the planning and design of their own service plan or pathway plan, including for example care pathways, personalised budgets, personal education and health plans. Ensuring the individual child is supported and empowered to have a say in decisions about their life and can meaningfully influence the way in which they receive services is the bedrock of good participation practice. This type is most relevant to participation in targeted and specialist settings, and the focus of most participation work in Children's Integrated Services and partner agencies working with vulnerable CYP. Evidence impacts on individual outcomes, but can also be aggregated to inform operational and strategic decision making.

**Social participation** – engagement in participation in settings where children and young people normally find themselves, for example community-based youth and play provisions, school or college, or community-level services; or through specific social action projects or volunteering programmes, where young citizens are involved in activities and programmes. This is most relevant to Early Help Play & Youth and wider Children's Partnership education and voluntary sector partners who engage and serve the needs of CYP at community level. Evidence impacts on operational decision-making and helping develop understanding of needs for more focused inquiry.

**Public participation** - typically through involvement of CYP in groups or forums, or through participation in surveys and consultations, activities linked to quality assurance and improvement of services, and representation on formal boards and committees. Shaping and informing decision making through co-productive activity, with potential to make strategic as well as operational impact.

Our strategy should aim to ensure children and young people have opportunities for meaningful participation across all three contexts, depending on the needs and aspirations of the individual at the point we engage with them; and we should be able to demonstrate through clear evidence the impact their voices have on improving services and the quality of provision for young citizens.

## **2. What we do well, and where there are gaps and reasons to improve**

### **a) Participation in targeted and specialist services**

#### Children in Care and Care Leavers

In addition to participation in their own LAC reviews and having their say through Independent Reviewing Officer, advocacy and independent visitor services, CiC have access to the following participative feedback mechanisms and activities:

- Children in Care and Care Leavers Have Your Say survey – annual opportunity for feedback on experiences of care, with results feedback to the Corporate Parenting Board. Participation from CiC cohort and tracked Care Leavers is typically between 15% and 20%, resulting in around 130 survey returns each year (though this was down to 80 in 2019 due to changes in the process). The survey process is managed in-house through CiC team and Engagement & Participation lead. Traditionally paper based but moving to online-based format for 2020.
- Mind of My Own – digital app supporting individual children and young people to feedback views, ideas and concerns to social care staff and support workers. Low rates of participation due to inconsistency of offer across children's social care.

- CIC Council provides opportunities for CiC aged 13+ and recent Care Leavers to be part of a peer-participation and friendship group engaged in co-production activity with the Council. The group meets monthly, enabling Corporate Parenting Board partners and social care managers to engage them as a reference group for strategic and operational issues. The group typically has around 12 members plus periodic involvement from young people from SEND-specific provision. Heads of service and the Portfolio Holder regularly attend. CiC Council members contribute to recruitment and selection, including participation as young assessors in Step Up to Social Work programme.
- For Care Leavers, the 'Your Voice' forum has periodically provided opportunities to have their say and be involved with service improvement initiatives via the Leaving Care Team, However, this provision is subject to fluctuation due to changing user group and staff support, and requires refresh.

### SEND Children & Young People

Rainbow Parent Carer Forum, the Government-recognised PCF for Nottingham includes participation as part of its regular activity sessions for parents and CYP. The Council's SEND team meets with parents and children through Rainbow, and SEND officers engage with service users. However, since the resource for SEND participation previously awarded to Rainbow was incorporated into part the Information, Advice and Support Service contract currently held by Futures, the availability of participation group work opportunities for CYP has become diffuse. Work is needed to reconnect and strengthen the offer. Special schools have a good level of engagement with our social and public participation programmes, including Primary Parliament and the Festival of Science and Curiosity.

### Young Carers

Action for Young Carers, run by Carers Federation, provides support to c.300 young carers in the city, and provides periodic opportunities for active participation through three age-related activity play and youth groups – 7-11, 12-14, and 15+. AYC regularly provides co-productive support to the strategic commissioning team in reviewing and developing young carers' provision.

### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services & CIC CAMHS

Where appropriate and possible, both CAMHS and CIC CAMHS teams offer individual users the opportunity to participate in their own assessments, intervention planning and medication reviews, and encourage feedback on service experience as a routine outcome measure. In addition, young people, parents and carers play an active role in CAMHS recruitment, contributing to interview questions as well as being present on practitioner interview panels. Young people, parents and carers have also been involved in developing psychoeducation workshops, which are available as podcasts on CAMHS' YouTube channel, and involved in the CAMHS newsletter.

Co-design and co-development of policies and procedures is a consistent offer, via MH:2K user youth leadership forum and the local advisory group, and the CAMHS Roadshow. The CIC CAMHS team meanwhile are in the process of developing a therapeutic group for children (DBT informed group).

### Young Justice Service

The YJS maintains processes for individual participation in reviews and intervention planning, through self-assessment. Despite efforts to establish group-based work, there is no current regular user participation forum. A service-wide survey is proposed and is being developed for introduction

this year, which will enable users to contribute views which can then be aggregated for service improvement and satisfy inspection criteria requirements.

#### **b) Participation in youth and volunteering settings**

The following groups directly are directly convened by the Council:

Youth Cabinet - a Council-managed reference group and youth leadership forum, for young people aged 16-24. The group supports the Council and partners with decision making on a range of issues, providing input into strategic and operational planning and contributing to recruitment and selection activity.

Youth Council - a convention of young people accessing Play & Youth services, which usually meets once term in a locality-based youth venue. Youth Council meetings enable the engagement with a representative cross-section of city youth, while giving young people opportunities to have their say, develop confidence and learn skills for active participation. Some Play & Youth provisions support regular ongoing participation through a local youth forum groups, however this practice is inconsistent and not embedded. Lack of clarity about responsibility for participation continues to hold back progress towards a more embedded participation culture in Early Help.

#### **c) Projects supporting active citizenship involvement and volunteering**

There are a wide range of voluntary sector-led youth groups and provisions offering opportunities for active citizenship, volunteering and participation in the city. However, opportunities are not always transparent or well shared or providers well connected, so would benefit from better networking, public communication and workforce training support. There is a growing focus on youth leadership amongst voluntary providers which should be developed to enable young people to assume peer support roles in their communities.

Connection to informal citywide learning engagement programmes such as FOSAC, ChalleNGE, the Young Creative Awards and National Citizenship Service, and involvement in Council-led engagement programmes such as Carbon Neutral 2028 and Central Library development provide rich opportunities to build capacity amongst providers and offer CYP more participation options.

#### **d) Projects in school settings**

The Council-run Primary Parliament is the principal convention of city primary school children aged 9-11 and is held twice a term at the Council House. Meetings typically involve around 16 schools and 60 students, and are supported by Portfolio Holders. Around 40 (or just over one half) of the city's primary schools participate in Primary Parliament over the course of the year. Primary Cabinet is an invitation follow-up event.

School and school-trusts typically make their own arrangements for school councils and similar student voice forums. A number of primary trusts have adopted our Primary Parliament model for use within their family of schools. Secondary school student voice activity is typically school-specific and not well connected, and remains bespoke.

### **3. What we need to do next**

In order to strengthen opportunities for meaningful participation in individual, social and public settings, we will:

- Support social work practice to ensure that they have time spent with children and young people; getting to know them, building relationships and understanding what life is like for them and what needs to change.
- Better link children and young people's voice to practice improvement by improving feedback through case file audits and considering options to secure the involvement of CYP in 'practice weeks', and other learning opportunities.
- Create capacity through paid opportunities for CYP to act as youth advocates, coordinating participation activity and inform our improvement journey moving forwards.
- Strengthen links to SEND participation providers, refresh the Your Voice for Care Leavers group, and develop opportunities for participation within Youth Justice Service, following inspection.
- Strengthen partnerships for participation, including links to schools through Designated Safeguarding Leads Network around voice of the child and work with voluntary and community services to support wider representation and diversity of voices.
- Develop creative models within the Reviewing Service to encouraging meaningful participation in reviews and better recording, feedback and action
- Use the voice of young people to shape culture and language of care, through joint work between practice forum and CIC Council
- Support the Workforce Strategy objectives for co-productive partnership working
- Review advocacy contract arrangements to try to maximise the participation resource for Child Protection cases
- Refresh the participation strategy network of officers from across Children's Integrated Services to provide planning and delivery support to the Engagement & Participation Lead
- Work with regional local authority partners through the East Midlands Regional Participation Leads Group, contributing to Regional Improvement Plan
- Support the development of the Child Friendly Nottingham through integration of the CYP Participation Strategy within the CFN framework, and explore opportunities to optimise resources within the programme to achieve the aims of the strategy
- Establish strong links with regional and national participation bodies to support this

A refreshed 2020-25 CYP Participation Strategy and accompanying SMART action plan incorporating will be presented for approval to Children's Partnership Board in Autumn 2020.

Participation and Engagement Lead  
July 2020