



Title of paper:	Children and Young People's Participation Strategy	
Report to:	Children's Partnership Board	
Date:	16.12.15	
Relevant Director:	Helen Blackman	Wards affected: All
Contact Officer(s) and contact details:	Jon Rea, Engagement and Participation Lead, jon.rea@notttinghamcity.gov.uk	
Other officers who have provided input:		
Relevant Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) priority:		
Safeguarding and supporting children and families: Children, young people and families will benefit from early and effective support and protection to empower them to overcome difficulties and provide a safe environment in which to thrive.		x
Promoting the health and wellbeing of babies, children and young people: From pregnancy and throughout life, babies, children, young people and families will be healthier, more emotionally resilient and better able to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.		x
Supporting achievement and academic attainment: All children and young people will leave school with the best skills and qualifications they can achieve and will be ready for independence, work or further learning.		x
Empowering families to be strong and achieve economic wellbeing: More families will be empowered and able to deal with family issues and child poverty will be significantly reduced.		x
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
This paper proposes the formal adoption of the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy by the Children's Partnership in line with post-Ofsted improvement plan and improved partnership working around engagement and participation.		
Recommendations:		
1	The Board affirms its commitment to the rights of children and young people to be involved in decisions which affect their lives	
2	The Board recognises that empowering the voice of the citizen is fundamental to good outcomes for children, young people and families	
3	The Board adopts the Participation Strategy and asks all partners to contribute to the successful delivery of the action plan	
4	An update report on the Participation Strategy is to be presented annually to the Board	

1 BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

1.1

Participation is the meaningful involvement of citizens in decisions which affect their lives. Participation describes how we empower citizens to have a voice, be heard and make a difference to the lives of their own and other citizens' lives. The first local strategy for participation was developed as part of the integration of children's services in 2007. Participation was embedded into the first Nottingham City Children and Young People's Plan in 2010 as a cross-cutting theme under the title of 'The Family Pledge'. This stimulated a broad range of work to develop forums, toolkits and ways of working around participation. This has had a significant impact on Children and Young People's services and the wider local authority.

1.2

Participation Strategy 2015-18

This latest Participation Strategy has been developed in response to changes to the wider strategic environment around Children's Services, the growth in demand for participation in response to the 'Citizens at the Heart' corporate strategic emphasis and other local and national citizen-focused initiatives, and the impact of changes to Ofsted inspection criteria and post-inspection recommendations.

We have responded positively to the challenges of the most recent Ofsted inspection. Recommended changes to our approach to the engagement and participation of children and young people have seen the establishment of a standing participation steering group annual. Our strategic approach has been rationalised and an annual action plan put in place to help co-ordinate and prioritise participation activities. Significantly new processes have been introduced into children's social care practice including the use of new templates to standardise the recording of children and young people's views. The evidence gathered helps improve not only the child's journey but also supports improvement of services, by aggregating evidence and using it to develop insight for service improvement. Meanwhile the areas in which we have an established culture of good participation - such as with the Children in Care Council and annual Have Your Say survey - have been further strengthened to improve the impact of participation and role model good practice to other services. The challenge before us now is to extend high quality participation opportunities to as many young citizens as possible, delivered by a workforce that is skilled and motivated and with intelligent, robust and measurable systems in place for recording and acting on the outcomes of participation work.

1.3

Drivers

The main drivers for the new Participation Strategy are:

- the publication of the Munro Report and subsequent changes to Ofsted inspection procedures; responding to and preparing for inspection criteria around active participation and voice of the child
- the development of local strategies and plans including the Family Support Pathway and Early Help strategies, ensuring participation approaches keep pace with new ways of working across the Children's Partnership

- the need to further embed participation approaches as part of the core knowledge and standard practice of the Children’s Services workforce
- the drive for more active youth participation in education, work and training including the Nottingham Growth Plan, STEM engagement agenda and ASPIRE programme
- the growth of active citizenship programmes including National Citizenship Service and Opportunity Notts

The strategy reconfirms the commitment by the Children’s Partnership to the values laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 12 which asserts the right of the child to be involved and have a say in decisions which affect their life.

1.4

Types of participation and partners

The strategy the three principle definitions of participation that we use to describe the processes, activities and culture around the voice of the child: namely individual, social and public (or group) participation. Although these different areas of participation offer opportunities for distinct approaches and specific outcomes the objective in all areas is fundamentally the same: to engage, enable and empower children and young people to have their voices heard and to play a meaningful and equal role in decision making.

Effective partnership working is critical in order for each of these approaches to successfully engage, enable and empower children and young people.

Individual participation encompasses the processes and practices that support the voice of the child in statutory areas including Children in Care and Children under Child Protection Orders, as well as those engaged by non-statutory targeted and specialist services including;

- Priority Families
- Common Assessment Framework
- Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Young Carers
- Child Sexual Exploitation and
- Youth Offending Teams.

Among these cohorts are many of the most vulnerable children and young people in the city who stand to benefit most from opportunities to participate. Their involvement in participation activities tends to be considerable due to the statutory demand and in most instances it is over a sustained period due to the long-term nature of their situation.

Social participation covers ‘everyday’ participation, involving children and young people engaged through universal as well as targeted services, including through education provision and community-based activities and facilities. This is the least well-defined area of participation. It is an area where more can be done to improve workforce skills and knowledge for participation-based work, and where there is plenty of scope to develop our understanding of what children and young people want through better feedback from social participation activities, for example by feeding the findings of social participation into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Public or group participation is a well-established and understood field of participation activity, with a lot of work operating in a context which adult-structured organisations understand and

interact with easily. Nottingham City enjoys a varied activity calendar of participation forums and groups under the umbrella of the *Participation in Governance* programme.

This includes:

- the Council's Youth Cabinet youth leadership group
- regular citywide Youth Council and Primary Parliament events and
- supported community-of-interest participation forums that include the Children in Care Council, the Special People Group for SEND young people and Action for Young Carers.

In addition there are a number of locality-based and voluntary sector supported participation groups and activities in the city which link with the *Participation in Governance* programme. As demand for participation by young citizens grows it is important that opportunities for group representation, organised active citizenship forums and youth leadership programmes are maintained and nurtured.

1.5

Duration of the strategy

This version of the strategy is intended to last until March 2019, in line with the new Children and Young People's Plan, with actions reviewed and updated annually to reflect year-on-year changes to priorities.

1.6

Strategy management arrangements

The strategy is managed by the Participation Steering Group (PSG) which is chaired by the Engagement and Participation Lead and meets six-weekly. The PSG oversees the year-on-year action plan, and ensures delivery, monitoring and reporting of actions. The group consists of representatives from the following service areas and the following teams and partners:

- Engagement and Participation Lead (Chair)
- Children's Social Care Team
- Children in Care Team
- Early Help Service
- Youth Offending Team
- Disabled Children's Team
- Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board
- Nottingham City Youth Cabinet

Annual reports to the Children's Partnership Board and regular feedback to the Nottingham Children's Safeguarding Board's Engagement and Communication sub-group and Youth Cabinet will ensure accountability of the strategy and action plan, and co-production with young people.

2 RISKS

- 2.1 Failure to adopt and implement the Participation Strategy and accompanying annual action plan leaves the Children's Partnership at risk of failing to meet Ofsted and other statutory inspection criteria.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Engagement and Participation Lead has a budget of £15,000 per annum to support the delivery of the Participation Strategy Action Plan including the *Participation in Governance* programme. Additional support for participation comes via commissioned services and discreet service budgets which are variable.

4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The strategy supports the fulfilment of statutory duties around Children in Care, Child Protection and SEND.

5 CLIENT GROUP

5.1 All children, young people and families including carers of children and young people.

6 IMPACT ON EQUALITIES ISSUES

6.1 The Participation Strategy is inclusive of all young citizens and their families and is delivered in partnership with other citizen-focused engagement programmes and structures, for example Age Friendly Nottingham Strategy and the Equality and Fairness Commission.

7 OUTCOMES AND PRIORITIES AFFECTED

7.1 The Participation Strategy impacts on all outcomes and priorities.

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