

**Brighton & Hove Children's Services
Participation & Engagement Strategy
2015 - 2018**

Brighton & Hove Children's Services

Participation & Engagement Strategy

Introduction

We want all our children, young people and their families to have the best possible start in life, so that they grow up happy, healthy and safe with the opportunity to fulfil their own potential.

This Participation & Engagement Strategy moves Brighton & Hove closer to achieving our Children's Services mission of creating a child-friendly city as defined by UNICEF.

We are launching the Brighton & Hove Children's Services Participation & Engagement Strategy at a time when the participation and engagement of children and young people is an accepted priority across some of the City's key plans.

The Connected City Strategy is focussed on increasing equality and improving engagement and says:

'It's a particular character of the city that people and communities expect to be asked their opinions and furthermore that those opinions will be taken into account. As a partnership we expect our members to talk to the people they provide services for and to listen and act upon what they say'.

The city council's Corporate Plan has prioritised:

- Strong Civic Leadership, strengthening our partnership delivery arrangements and building collaborative, trustful and empowering relationships between the council and citizens
- Quality Public Services, a council that understands communities and ensures the right services are provided well, managing rising demand and putting staff, partners and citizens at the heart of delivery.

This means knowing what drives demand for services by engaging with our diverse communities and understanding how effective our services are in meeting citizen's needs; and building more collaborative relationships between citizens and the council to empower people to do some things for themselves in partnership with us.

The Children's Service Directorate Plan sets a key objective to *'ensure the voice of children, young people and their families is central to our work'* and to demonstrating that we are a child friendly city.

Participation Matters

Active participation and engagement benefits children, young people, families and communities and the organisations that provide and commission services:

- Building the confidence and competence of users has a protective effect, a culture in which services listen to users and take what they say seriously is a society committed to child protection
- Fresh perspectives and new ideas about service policies and democratic processes which will help to tackle key objectives and promote social inclusion
- Improved services that are more responsive to the needs of users
- Development of skills; increased confidence and self-esteem of community members
- Positive sense of belonging to the community and wider society
- Increased ability to influence
- A more vibrant local democracy: involvement can strengthen relationships within families and within communities
- Community cohesion: a nation is democratic to the extent that all citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. Democracy has to be experienced, rather than taught and it is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities to take part.
- An empowering environment that raises aspirations: users whose opinions are listened to, who are given information and explanations, and who are encouraged to articulate their views, are also learning to exercise social responsibility and are far more likely to understand those obligations towards others

Developing the strategy

This strategy has been developed by a multi-agency, cross sector working group from the Council's Children's Services including Youth Work, Sure Start, Social Work, the Integrated Disability Service, Education and inclusion, and Stronger Families Stronger Communities; and other council staff including Communities and Equalities and Public Health teams; and representatives from the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Children's Service Youth Participation Team involved a wide range of young people including the Brighton and Hove's Youth Council. Young people reviewed proposals and advised the working group throughout the development of the strategy.

We have found that effective participation and engagement already underpins the work of many services: from individual statutory social care, health and education plans; through early help and family plans; to the delivery of parenting, children's centre activities and the activities of School Councils and of course the Youth Council (see appendix 1). The following are examples of current good participation and engagement practice:

- BHCC hosting Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day
- Youth Service Facebook provides an up-to-date sign-posting of provision across the city
- The Youth Employability interactive feedback mechanisms
- The Young Ambassadors role in recruitment and selection of staff
- The Youth Council and its involvement as a decision maker in the Children's Committee
- The annual Children in Care Awards

The Strategy will create a consistent approach in working with children, young people and families to ensure they have a powerful voice to influence the development, planning, commissioning and delivery of services by the council and its partners.

It recognises that we will have to work hard to ensure that the voices of all children and young people and their families are heard and so we will pay particular attention to ensuring the participation of all groups including those with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

We have developed the Children's Services Participation & Engagement Strategy on the locally and nationally used and well recognised 7 S Model which is a concise, systematic, robust and tested model in embedding participation and engagement within organisational structures.

The framework is made up of 7 standards - the building blocks for the active involvement of children, young people and families: and rely on each other to evidence participation and engagement. They are:

1. **Shared Values** – Living Our Values Everyday, collaboration, respect, openness, efficiency, creativity and of course customer and client focus, are at the core of our civic leadership
2. **Strategy** – commissioning and business plans clearly articulate participation and engagement
3. **Structure** – opportunities to participate and engage are accessible and celebrate involvement
4. **Systems** – standards and quality assurance for safe and sound practice are in place
5. **Staff** – we have the right people in place across the organisation, including members and governors; all play an important role in the active involvement of children, young people and their

families in decision making. From taking part in recruitment and selection to being employed in the organisation: we all need to champion the benefits.

6. **Skills and knowledge** – training for all (staff including our partners, elected members, young people and parent/carers) to develop the skills and confidence to participate fully.
7. **Style of leadership** – promoting and embedding participation and engagement in our culture requires strong leadership. Support at senior and executive level is essential to develop structure, systems and resources for maximum impact.



National Youth Agency in partnership with the Local Government Association. <http://www.nya.org.uk/our-services/hear-right/>

Strategy Actions

Implementation will be through council business and service plans, partnership arrangements and commissioning processes.

Standards	Strategic Actions	Success Criteria
1. Shared values – Living Our Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Children’s Services and partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and policy

<p>Everyday</p>	<p>adopt the Living Our Values Everyday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shared values are used to set policy and review performance across Children’s Services and with our partners • Children, young people and families are involved in evaluating and feeding back on progress and change on an annual basis 	<p>statements published</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity, media reports and recruitment and selection material • Performance indicators and success criteria
<p>2. Strategy – the plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and engagement is reflected in strategic and business planning • The plans include resources to sustain, develop and regenerate involvement • Through the Partnership Forum and other advisory groups children, young people and families take part in reviewing plans, identifying change achieved and that which is still needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of relevant strategies and plans accessible in style, language and distribution • Action plan and timescales for service development • Audit of the active involvement of children, young people and families clearly
<p>3. Structure – the scaffolding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people are consulted on best structures for their active involvement • There are structures that make sure a range of service users views especially the inclusion of marginal groups are built in to decision making • Service users are joint partners in decision making on issues affecting them • Arrangements to support involvement in decision making will facilitate and promote the independence of young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from service users is shared along with recommendations from relevant professionals • A review by service users of who is and isn’t involved, with steps agreed to make structures more inclusive • Audit of active involvement in partner organisations and specific services.
<p>4. Systems – the machinery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems are in place for the safe and sound conduct of service users active involvement, covering consent, protection and safety, access, complaints and rewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures are published including compliments, complaints and recruitment and selection

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users involved in reviewing and updating relevant policies and procedures • Service users work alongside staff, including elected members, to regularly evaluate active involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of consultations with service users in developing policy and procedures including access • Feedback from different interest groups to include celebration of success
5. Staff including elected members – the workers who build	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key individuals (executive, elected members) are identified to champion active involvement • Service users take part in recruiting staff • Develop an induction and training programme for staff, elected members, involving service users • Review the current support mechanisms in order to maximise the direct involvement of young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champions promote active involvement in key organisational publications • Recruitment and selection involves service users in key appointment relevant to them • Staff appraisal (PDP) specifically covers active involvement work
6. Skills and knowledge – service users and the worker’s skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training for service users to build confidence and competence, including in negotiation, presentation and finance to actively take part • Conduct an annual skills audit and staff development plan on active involvement of service users • Service users help plan, deliver and evaluate active involvement training of staff, members, partners and service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on service user access to information is available • Record of service user involvement in developing, delivering and evaluating training • Accreditation scheme and records of active involvement
7. Style of leadership – the boss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High profile champions identified, with clear remit to manage change • Organisations work in partnership to promote active involvement • Service users hold organisations to account and have a key role in scrutiny processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An annual report identifying and celebrating progress in promoting service user participation • Publish compact with partner organisations that reflects commitment • Minutes of meetings explaining leadership decisions

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The Building Standards is published by The National Youth Agency in partnership with the Local Government Association.

<http://www.nya.org.uk/our-services/hear-right/>

Appendix 1

Appendix 1: Summary of good practice

Stakeholder involvement

Development of the Participation and Engagement strategy has been through a multi-agency, cross sector working group comprising officers from the councils' Children's Service including Youth Work, Sure Start, Social Work, the Integrated Disability Service, Education and Inclusion, and Stronger Families Stronger Communities Years; other council staff including Communities and Equalities and Public Health teams; and representatives from the Community and Voluntary Sector.

In addition members of the Brighton & Hove Youth Council formed a Young Persons Participation Strategy Group to complement the working group. Young people reviewed proposals and advised the working group throughout the development process using the experience gained from involvement in participative activities.

Summary of current activity:

As part of developing the strategy the working group undertook a mapping exercise across children's services. The following is a summary:

- **Social work:** Individual care plans; child protection conference (12+); Looked After Care reviews; interviews about the service young people receive; informed about their rights and the council's priorities to support (Pledge); Children in Care Council (CiCC) – young people's issues inform Corporate Parenting; Personal Opportunity Plan (POP) for 16+; Youth Advocacy Project (YAP); Young Ambassadors Programme – care leavers involved in recruitment and selection; Young Assessors programme – care leavers inspect care homes and foster agencies; and annual CiCC awards
- **Youth work:** Equality Impact Assessments – focused group work with vulnerable young people; 121 work with targeted young people and evaluations; suggestion book/box in all youth centres; evaluation of group work programmes in schools; observations of service delivery to inform service improvement; Youth Voice Vehicles (BHYC, CiCC, DYPC) – young people's issue inform decision makers; Campaigns; young people sit on decision making boards; young people represent the views of others on a regional and national level; various projects; youth forums; consultations; NEET Advisory group; Youth Employability Service (YES) YouTube Channel, Facebook page, twitter, Pinterest, Flickr and Tumblr; quiz's; surveys and films and DVDs
- **Disability Services:** Aiming High Advisory (AHA!) group – young people advising the DCSPB; annual newsletter; annual service consultation; quarterly feedback via social workers; parent/carer day; parent charter; inspection of services and award stars (rating 0-3); SEND review and surveys
- **Stronger Families Stronger Communities:** telephone conversations with parents includes feedback on service; listen to children, young people and families; gender specific consultation fun days; and university to deliver an evaluation of the programme working with a focus group of family coaches and clients to develop a 3 tier evaluation using questionnaires/telephone interviews/in depth conversations

- **Children’s Centres:** individual early help plans asking parents for the views of their children; quarterly advisory groups – parent views and service improvement; parent feedback and evaluations; city wide annual customer satisfaction survey; parent involvement – support parents to volunteer, take part in the advisory groups and collecting parents views; comment books in Children’s Centres; Your Said We Did boards in Children’s Centres; and Equality Impact Assessments focus groups – teenage parents, and parents with English as an additional language.
- **Education and Inclusion:** annual Safe and Well Survey (SAWS); Health and Wellbeing and PSHE Advisers guidance and recommendations – review and development of key policies; CVS invited to consult young people on key documents; focus groups to inform school improvement; Secondary School Student Equality Conference; school governor training; Educational Psychology Workers – young people’s views fed back to parents, schools through meetings, reports and conferences to inform business planning; evaluations; B&H Music and Arts website; online student forum feedback to teacher/Leadership team/B&H Music Trust; Equality Impact Assessments; SEN review meetings; SEN Panel meetings; and Local Offer consultation with young people

In June 2014 our young service users discussed the mapping exercise. They acknowledged the variety and amount of participation and engagement that takes place within Children’s Services. They also discussed gaps in provision and suggested the following additions:

- Service user boards that shadow decision making boards.
- Recognise achievements by establishing an Outstanding People’s Award Ceremony.
- Communicate policy and business plans in a clear way and make them inclusive.

In September 2014 the Children’s Services Staff Roadshows provided an opportunity to share good practice of effective and innovative participation and engagement work with children, young people and their families. The following are some of the examples discussed:

- BHCC hosting Children’s Commissioner’s Takeover Day
- Youth Service Facebook provides an up-to-date sign-posting of provision across the city
- The Early Assessment Team’s Red Book is tailored to the needs of young women with SEND
- The Youth Employability interactive feedback mechanisms
- The Young Ambassadors role in recruitment and selection of staff
- The Youth Council and its involvement as a decision maker in the Children’s Committee
- The annual Children in Care Awards

In March 2014 our CVS representatives consulted with their respective organisations and provided examples of principles and good practice.

Information to follow

Appendix 2

Related Documents

The voice of children, young people and their families is central to Children's Services and the key public sector strategies prioritise participation and engagement. The following related documents inform this strategy.

- Brighton & Hove City Council Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019
- Brighton & Hove: The Connected City – our sustainable community strategy
- Brighton & Hove Children's Services Directorate Plan 2014 – 2017
- Brighton and Hove Early Help Partnership Strategy 2013 – 2017
- Community and Engagement Framework

The above are available via the council website: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk

- National Participation Strategic Vision 2010: An Equal Place at the Table for Children and young People
www.participationworks.org.uk
- National Youth Agency: Hear by Right
<http://www.nya.org.uk/our-services/hear-right/>
- Transforming Participation in Health and Care: The NHS Belongs to Us 2013
<http://www.england.nhs.uk>
- Positive for Youth: a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 -19
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/positive-for-youth>
- Times Educational Supplement
<https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resources/>

